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The Popular Magazine

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NO. 5

2

OCTOBER TWENTIETH 1918

Complete Novel

"The Quitters"

By

FRANCIS LYNDE

"Ball Three"

By

H. C. WITWER

also

STACPOOLE - PACKARD - COOLIDGE

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Dipped From the Stream

A FEW TYPICAL LETTERS FROM THE VOLUME OF CORRESPONDENCE FROM "POPULAR" READERS. "DO YOUR SUBSCRIBERS READ THE LETTERS YOU PRINT? YE GODS!" WRITES ONE OF THEM.

H. W. Henderson, Jefferson, O.: Do your subscribers read the letters you print? Ye Gods! Your issue of February 20th, 1917, published a letter I wrote from Mars, Pa., mentioning that I had a lot of back numbers I was willing to sell. I have received inquiries from every State in the Union, from Porto Rico, and from Canada, and even to-day got another from a Business man who says: "I have read THE POPULAR for many years, and think the same as you do about it; in fact, I have tried a lot of other magazines, but cannot get interested in them." Here's a suggestion in the line of conservation: Omit one meal every two weeks, and buy a POPULAR.

P. S.—When I moved I disposed of all my back numbers. Please mention this as soon as possible, or five years from now I will be getting inquiries.

A. D. Mainard, Battery C, 64th Regiment, C. A. C., Fort Barrancas, Fla.: Your story in the March 20th number, "Not According to Hoyle," Bruckman, is worth its weight in gold. If it could have had a universal circulation a year ago there would have been very few Joe Boyles in our army. The man higher up would not be there if he did not know his business. THE POPULAR is the best of all good magazines.

J. B. Mercer, alias "Shorty," with the American Expeditionary Forces in France: I want to ask a favor. I found an old POPULAR in a dugout. In it is a continued story, "In His Place," by H. de Vere Stacpoole. I read it before I noticed that it was continued, and after bumming through the whole brigade, eventually found another soldier, with more of the story. It's a darned good yarn. Please send the two remaining numbers. Candle's burning out, and so must close. Yours in haste.

Mrs. M. B. Beaufort, Bedford, Va.: Whatever else you exclude from your magazine as unnecessary, do not shorten the editorials or the "Chat." Also, let Hamby, Holman Day, and Knibbs write as much as they will. And please give us a few more stories like Wallace's "Man Who Knew," and Stacpoole's "In His Place." I want to read something that grips the attention and takes the mind from war and other disagreeable things. Can we communicate with the dead? Possibly, but not probably. Why should we? Not only does the Book forbid us to "seek the truth from the dead," but we have no need to do so. We have Moses and the Prophets, also Christ and the Apostles. If we will not hear them, neither would we hear though one rose from the dead.

R. J. Doebler, Minto, N. D.: Since the first copy of THE POPULAR was issued I have read every one, and I consider the magazine the best steady diet for reading in America. The stuff to put across right now is war stories, such as those by Metcalfe and Bronson-Howard, which will have a tendency to wake up some of the natives who have been asleep for the past year or two.

W. C. Fisher, Uvalde, Tex.: I have been a constant reader of THE POPULAR from the beginning, and I particularly admire the work of Bower, Sinclair, Chisholm, and Ferguson.

E. E. Stallings, LaFayette, Ala.: After reading the last story and the "Chat," I must say a few words of praise. I have been a regular reader of THE POPULAR since the fifth issue, and the last one seems the best. I get some of my old copies down occasionally, and read them over. Paine and Davis are strong. THE POPULAR is worth five times the present price, but can't you let it come every week?

Ramsey Wallace, Management David Belasco, 219 West 81st St., New York City: Will you kindly advise me as to how I may get in touch with Mr. Will Levington Comfort, in regard to the motion-picture and possibly the dramatic rights to "The Tiger Lily?" Have read only the first two installments, but it is unnecessary to go any further.

THE POPULAR MAGAZINE

VOL. L.

OCTOBER 20, 1918.

No. 3.

The Quitters

By Francis Lynde

Author of "Scientific Sprague," "For the Money in It," Etc.

Were they loyal or disloyal? That was the question agitating their friends and acquaintances. From all indications, these two fine American fellows were not only slackers, but probably something worse. Their situation was untenable. Even when they tried to right themselves, it appeared that they were only indulging in secret machinations with the subtle enemy. Mr. Lynde has managed to outdo himself in this novel of intrigue and adventure, which means that you won't put down the story till you have finished it.

(A Complete Novel)

CHAPTER I.

"IT NEVER RAINS——"

TOMMY ORMSBY—"Tom Junior" in Middlesboro, where he had grown up and knew everybody—readjusted the shade of the electric desk light and stared again at the figures on the typewritten sheet before him; stared in shocked astoundment, while the perspiration started out clammy in the palms of his hands. For at the foot of the sheet there should have appeared, if the Ormsby Machine Works bookkeeper, Briggs, had properly labeled his statement, the grim word "bankruptcy."

The time was the evening of a day memorable, not only in the Ormsby annals, but also in the history of the nation and the world. Tommy, called in by wire from his job of traveling salesman to grab the helm when his father was hurriedly carried off to the hospital, had returned to the office after business hours to examine the summarized statement which the bookkeeper had promised to have ready by quitting time. For weeks past Tommy had been anxious about the senior Thomas' health; had harbored a suspicion that ragged nerves and business troubles might be chasing each other in vi-

cious circles. But he had had no idea how frightfully the circles had narrowed.

A study of the statement showed that the downward slide had been progressive, with a rapid acceleration toward the last. The Ormsby Machine Works, once the most popular going concern in Middlesboro, manufactured a line of patented railroad specialties. But for some years the railroads, cornered between the devil of limited earnings and the deep blue sea of unlimited expenses, had been buying more cannily. Ormsby, senior, saying nothing, and even omitting the ordinary family retrenchments of a man in difficulties, had stumbled on, following the shrinking market, snapping up contracts where they were to be had, and apparently ignoring the fact that his buying market for raw materials was skyrocketing higher and still higher with each successive munitions order from the Allies. The result, over which Tom, junior, was now sweating, was a simple sum in subtraction: contracts to be filled at ruinous figures of loss, and—no stock in hand with which to fill them.

Tommy Ormsby ran his fingers through his hair and gasped. "Suffering cats!" he exploded. "A thing like this to jump up and knock us at a time like this!"

Mechanically, his gaze shifted from the

death-warrant figures to a copy of the evening paper he had bought on his way to the office. In a scarehead running all across its front page was the announcement that Congress had taken the final step and the country was at war. Like many others, Tommy had forecast the step as one of the things inevitable, and had long since made up his mind as to what he should do; what any red-blooded young fellow must do.

But now the bookkeeper's statement was like an iron hand outstretched to bar the way. If he should enlist in the naval reserve, which was what he had been planning to do, leaving the business like a ship abandoned in a storm, there could be only one possible outcome—a wreck which might easily crush the sick man into his grave, and would certainly leave the family penniless. On the other hand, a swift and vigorous campaign of reorganization might salvage the wreck and thus save the day for the sick man and the dependent ones.

Yet this was only a chance. Being a well-balanced young business man, Tommy Ormsby saw instantly the tremendous magnitude of the reorganization job. Ormsby senior had been borrowing frantically at the local bank—on demand notes—and Grimsby, the bank's president, was a hard man. Let but a whisper of the true state of affairs reach him, and the wreck was as good as accomplished. Tommy held his head in his hands and did a lot of rapid-fire thinking. Two things were clear: the ruinous railroad contracts must be canceled—they simply could not be filled; and some other work, work that would pay a real profit, must be found to take their place.

Sweating like a ditch laborer, Tommy wrestled desperately with the double-headed problem. The first half of it, the canceling of the contracts, presented plenty of difficulties, but they were not insuperable. With the nation at war, a multitude of readjustments must be made—war conditions would force them. Tommy knew his principal customers pretty well and thought he stood at least an even chance of begging off, with a minimum of lawsuits. But what was to take the place of the abandoned railroad work?

Like a flash of inspiration the answer came. His single asset was a machine shop well equipped to turn out specialties. The war was a war of machinery. With the nation on the eve of a prodigious campaign of preparation, its mechanical industries

must be instantly mobilized. If he could secure a government contract of some sort, he—

The idea had no sooner taken shape in his mind before the difficulties began to tumble in. Time, precious time, must be wasted in trying to get the railroad contracts called off; and beyond that lay the uncharted sea of securing the new work and preparing for it. More than all, every move must be made in resolute secrecy. If Banker Grimsby should get a bare hint of the contract cancellation it was good-by; the smash would come between two days.

Even this wasn't quite the worst of it. Ever since the black day on which the news of the sinking of the *Lusitania* had been flashed over the land, Tommy, in common with other red-blooded persons, and aided and abetted by his fiercely patriotic sister, Margaret, had eaten war and slept it and talked it. He even proposed going to Canada and enlisting as a make-believe Britisher. But now, if the business plant were to be pulled through to success, he could neither enlist at once, nor give the real reason why he was hanging back. Secrecy, and then more secrecy, must be the watchword if Grimsby were to be held off.

It made him perspire afresh when he thought of the whiplashings he would have to endure. All Middlesboro knew the stand he had been taking, and even if the campaign of reorganization should win out, people would point him out as a coward who was afraid to make his word good, or would say that he was staying at home to make money; that he had deliberately stultified himself to become a war profiteer.

Of course, all this would be only for a time—a mighty short time, he promised himself. With the business affair hammered into some sort of shape, he would turn it over to Randall, the shop superintendent, get his father's permission to offer their Florida yacht—one of the extravagances of the Machine Works' most prosperous period—to the government, and, if the offer should be accepted, would take the first train for Jacksonville and would himself sail the yacht up to Norfolk and enlist with it.

Still the dreadful interval which must be gone through was appalling, and he sprang up and began to tramp back and forth within the narrow limits of the private office.

"If I could only explain as I go along!"

he groaned. "But I can't—can't even tell it at home! Marge would be all right; she'd understand, and she's got a nerve like a red Indian at the stake. But I can't tell her without telling mother; and mother couldn't keep still to save her life—not after people begin calling me a slacker. And if I don't tell Marge, she'll flay me alive for a quitter—after the way I've ranted and stormed about the nation's slacking. She's sore enough, already, about Melly Howell. It's simply insufferable how she refuses point-blank to believe that Melly is as anxious to get by as anybody can be, and that he's dubious only because his mother has hypnotized him into thinking he has a bad heart!

"Then there's Alicia—Allie and the good old doctor: Allie won't say a word, because she doesn't happen to be built that way, but it sets me afire when I think of what she'll be thinking. She won't have an atom of use for a slacker—any more than Marge—and I wouldn't put it past her to break our engagement short off. Oh, *damn!*"

Two other turns up and down the room brought no relief; merely a little more amplification of the prospective journey over hot plowshares.

"I shall be obliged to tell Melly, because I'm going to need legal advice—scads of it—and while he's only a gosling lawyer, he's got a long head. I wonder where the dickens he has gone, and why he didn't leave word with somebody about when he'd be back? It does beat the everlasting band how the gun always jams at the very minute when you want to speed it up to the limit! Nothing doing, not a wheel to be turned until I can find out where we stand, legally, on these contracts. And that won't be until Melly gets home."

And with this, since the way was thus blocked for the time being, he chuckled the accusing statement into the safe, twirled the knob of the combination, locked the office and went home.

CHAPTER II.

"—BUT IT POURS."

Young Mr. Melburn Howell, whose absence from Middleboro at a moment when Tommy Ormsby needed him most, has been noted, bore the unenviable distinction of figuring as a sick man who was blatantly and ostentatiously a picture of abounding health.

To the eye of the beholder there was nothing lacking to complete the picture. Big-muscled, fair-haired, with laughing blue eyes and a skin that always looked as if he had just stepped out of his bath, Melly Howell might have taken the part of the hero in a Greek play, so far as outward appearances were concerned. But his heart—

There were two things the matter with Melly's heart. One was that he had long since given it away, with all its belongings and appurtenances, to Margie Ormsby. And the other—but thereby hangs a tale; the twice-told tale of an overwrought and anxious mother. Melly's father, a county-seat attorney in easy circumstances, had been carried off in middle life by some sort of heart trouble, and from the day of his death his widow had gone about in fear and trembling. Firmly convinced that the father's ailment was of the hereditary sort, she was constantly expecting its reappearance in her only son.

To drive the wedge of anxiety still deeper, the Howell family doctor had early confirmed the widow's fears. There had been ominous talk of cardiac diatheses, and false rhythm, and congenital peculiarities in the systole and diastole, coupled with much cautionary advice. With proper care the hereditary tendency might never develop; but the care must be taken.

The care was taken. Throughout his boyhood Melly labored under a burden of "don'ts" heavy enough to sink a ship. Rough play was strictly interdicted, and schoolboy athletics were entirely out of the question. In college it was the same—or it was supposed to be; but here the supposition missed the mark by several miles. In spite of the home handicap, Melly had grown into a very pretty figure of an all-around athlete; the aptest of timber for the football squad. For the nine months of the freshman year he held aloof, in deference to the widow's worries, and perhaps just a trifle on account of the hereditary hypnosis. Then, in a tempted moment, he fell—from the side lines to the gridiron actual—and speedily became the superidol of his class and college.

Strange to say, the threatened heart had behaved beautifully. Accidents there were, of course, and in his final year a torn leg ligament which laid him up for a month—and was accounted for at home by a neatly

camouflaged story of a bad fall. But the heart—which had by this time been thrust forcibly into the keeping of Margie Ormsby—never missed a beat; hammered steadily along through the postgraduate law-reading period, and bade fair—if Margie could be induced to take it “to have and to hold”—to last out an average lifetime.

It was while America was still neutral that young Howell was admitted to the bar. But the *Lusitania* had been torpedoed and America was stirring. Melly stirred with it, and so, for that matter, did the anxious widow. There was no use in Melly's talking about enlisting; he would simply drop dead in his tracks, as his poor father had. Thus the widow, who really believed what she said, and, though she did say it, was no whit less patriotic than thousands of other American mothers of an only son.

On the other hand, Margie Ormsby was palpably scornful, making it extremely uncomfortable for a young lover who was torn between a keen desire to fight for his country and a dutiful reluctance—buttressed just a little, perhaps, by the ingrained fear that there might possibly be something in the hereditary notion—to override his mother's convictions. Margie wore a recruiting badge, reproached her own brother for taking it out in patriotic and warlike talk, and, completely ignoring the legend of the damaged heart, threatened to pin a white feather upon Melly if he should disregard his country's call.

More than willing to be urged to do the thing he most wished to do, Melly had taken a day off to go surreptitiously to a recruiting office in a near-by city; and was much amazed when he found that it was the torn leg ligament, and not his heart action, which kept him from passing the physical examination.

Thus matters stood at the time when it became evident that America was going to quit being neutral. Joyously confident that he could squeeze the football leg by under a real war call for volunteers, Howell took another day off, made a wire appointment with a heart specialist in a great city, and went up in the hope of getting a clean bill of health that would convince even his anxious mother.

The trip was made on the day in which Tommy Ormsby was to find himself suddenly thrust into the place of commanding officer on the bridge of the sinking business

ship. Melly had sweated through the four-hour train journey to the city, had eaten a rather hearty luncheon at his hotel, and was hurrying to keep his appointment with the specialist. At the entrance of the skyscraper, on a lofty floor of which the great doctor had his office rooms, Fate stuck out a malicious foot and tripped Mr. Melburn Howell.

The incident was only an incident, and not a tragedy—as, for the moment, it threatened to be; but it answered the fateful purpose. There were flowing traffic streams in front of the big building, and through them a young girl foolishly tried to wedge her way. Dodging under the very bits of a truck team going east, she popped neatly in front of a touring car going west; jumped, screamed, and stood still, after the manner of terrified women the world over.

As handsomely as if he had been clipped from the third reel of a movie thriller, Melly danced in to the rescue; snatched up the girl, whirled, leaped again, and then spoiled the entire film by making a very clumsy slide and fall to safety, the fall being the old football wound's revenge for the side-wise wrench and a moment of forgetfulness.

Having a man-sized horror of the kind of notoriety the “heroic rescuer” gets, Melly scrambled to his feet, paused just long enough to make sure that the girl wasn't hurt, and bolted for the skyscraper vestibule and the nearest of the elevators. The breath-taking ascent in an express car, added to the girl-snatching and the fall, did the business for him. When, after a few moments in the doctor's anteroom, he stripped to his shirt in the examining presence, his heart was pounding away like a trip hammer, and his efforts to tone it down when the stethoscope was applied only made matters worse.

“Um,” said the great man, letting his eyes narrow as he listened; “didn't overlook the elevators and run all the way upstairs, did you?”

“No,” said Melly, “but I slipped and fell on the sidewalk just before I came up.”

Now if he had told the doctor all that had gone on before the fall, things might have turned out differently. But since he was still congratulating himself upon his lucky escape from the newspaper headlines, he added nothing to the bare statement of fact.

“Ever troubled with palpitation?” was the next query.

"If I have been, I didn't know it by that name."

"How about your record?—parents both living?"

"My mother is; my father died when he was thirty-eight."

"Of what?"

"Heart trouble of some kind. He was found dead in his chair. There was no autopsy."

The gray-bearded expert talked easily upon indifferent topics for a few moments and then clapped the stethoscope on a second time. The very suddenness of the renewed assault set the foolish heart jumping again. When it was all over, the gray-beard said his say briefly.

"You're wanting to get into the service," he began, much as if the stethoscope had enabled him to read Melly's mind. "That is what they all want when they come to see me nowadays. I'd have to put you under observation to give you an exact diagnosis, but I can tell you this much; you might pass the ordinary recruiting examiner—though if your present condition is any criterion, there'll be symptoms that ought to make him hesitate."

"And if I should pass?"

"After that, you'd probably put in a period of training in some mobilization camp, and in the course of it you'd come up against the real army surgeons—and you can't fool them."

"I'd be thrown out?"

"Certainly; if you're not fit. The army is looking for assets, just now; not liabilities."

"And you'd call me a liability?"

"I didn't say that; couldn't say it definitely without the observation I spoke of."

"M-m-m," said Melly, trying not to look as dismal as he felt. "Pleasant prospect."

"You needn't worry," was the brusque reply. "There will be plenty of landward jobs for the men who can't fight."

"But I'd much rather fight."

"Of course; any man would. But you are not personally to blame if your parents gave you a weak-heart diathesis. You want to fight, but also want to live. The fee? It will be just half as much as it would be if I could send you to a recruiting sergeant. Good day."

At this point it must be remembered that Melly Howell, in spite of his splendid arms and legs and the stiff proving ground of the

college football field, had been carefully and systematically hypnotized on the heart question from his boyhood up. As a matter of fact, the great specialist had not given him a definite decision either way. But the hypnotism got busy at once. He was smashed. The great doctor had been merely trying to let him down easy. Tommy—good old Tommy Ormsby—would get his billet in the service, and all their plans about going in together would be knocked into a cocked hat.

In some such gloomy frame of mind as this he caught a late afternoon train for Middlesboro, and made bad weather of it all the way home, arriving at a moment when half the town, it seemed, was at the railroad station to give a patriotic send-off to a handful of Middlesboro youths who were rushing to the colors at the first preliminary clang of the war tocsin.

Ordinarily, he would have expected to find Margie Ormsby among the flag wavers; caught himself wondering why she wasn't there; and then remembered that she had a father in the hospital. Though it was pretty late, he went around by the Ormsby house on his way home, the ostensible excuse being the sheer neighborly duty of asking how the sick man was getting along, and the real one being a crude, manlike desire for sympathy.

Margie was at the gate when he came up, as if she were waiting for somebody. The light of the street arc at the corner showed him a changed Margie; a Margie with the fires of enthusiasm damped down, and palpable and rather haggard anxiety in the dark-brown eyes.

"You, Melly?" she said; and then: "I've been wondering why you didn't come."

"I've been out of town," he explained briefly. "How is your father to-night?"

"Not any worse, Doctor Trimmell says. I have just phoned to ask. But it's bad enough."

"Tom is home?"

"Yes; he got in at noon to-day and took daddy's place at the Works. He is down there now. Mother is at the hospital. Won't you come in?"

He walked with her as far as the steps and they sat down. It was a warm evening for April, and the night air was sweet with the fragrances of budding spring. The young woman was the first to break the step-sitting silence.

"Of course, you have seen the evening papers?"

"Yes."

"We knew it would come; it had to come."

He nodded soberly.

"I've been thinking—thinking hard," she went on. "It has come at a bad time for us; with daddy out of it, and business not any too good at the Works, I'm afraid. But Tom must have his chance."

"To enlist, you mean? A little later, perhaps?"

"No, now. I've thought it all out. This war is going to be the woman's opportunity, Melly. I'm going to take Tom's place at the Works, until daddy gets up again. I can do it, with Mr. Randall's help; you know I can."

He did know it. Among her other gifts, which were many, the steady-voiced, capable young woman at his side numbered the priceless gift of organization; the ability to see ahead and plan. And she had always been familiar with the business routine of the Machine Works.

"I haven't seen Tom yet, but I fancy he won't agree to anything like that," he objected.

"He will agree to anything that will leave him free to do his duty."

"There will be many kinds of war duty," he suggested, throwing up a hasty little breastwork against the thing he knew was coming.

"Besides fighting, you mean? Not for the young men, Melly. There will be plenty of those who can't fight, but who *can* do other things. Have you decided yet for yourself?—as between the army and navy, I mean."

She had never taken him on quite that tack before; with the calm, serious, of-course-you'll-go assumption that apparently shut off all argument.

"It isn't a matter of decision," he returned slowly. "God knows, I want to go badly enough. But I'm afraid I'm out of it." And then he told her of the visit to the great heart specialist, giving, of course, his own hypnotically colored translation of the verdict which was really no verdict at all.

For a time she made no reply—which in itself was ominous. And when she did speak there was a certain quality in the low-toned voice that cut him like a knife.

"Have I known you all my life, Melly,

only to find out at the last that I haven't known you at all?" she asked.

"I don't know why you should say that," he evaded.

"I can't help saying it. I have been taking you for a man, you know."

"Am I to blame for a thing I can't help?"

"I won't argue that point with you. You think you have inherited something that Doctor Trimmell says can't be inherited—in spite of what old Doctor Bushnell told your mother when you were a child. You grow up a great, strong man, able to do anything, or endure anything, that other men can. You've never had a symptom; you've told me so, time and again. And yet, when the test comes, you fail. What you have really inherited is your mother's ability to worry about nothing. It's forgivable in a woman; but in a man——"

They were hard words, bitter words, and how was he to know that, outraged love, and a spectacle of crumbling idols, and flaming patriotism, and cruel disappointment, and a lot of other tragic emotions, were responsible for them? He rose from his seat on the porch step.

"Then you think I am a willing slacker?" he offered.

"You are forcing me to think that you care more for your fears than you do for your country in its time of need. I can't think that way of the man I may some day marry, Melly." Then the flaming patriotism got the upper hand: "I won't ever marry a man who thinks twice for himself and only once for his highest duty—who is willing to stay at home and let other men do his fighting for him!"

When a fond lover has been hunting sympathy and has been given instead a sharp box on the ear, it is only your true sheepman who can take it meekly.

"I'm sorry. If that is the way you feel about it, good night!" said Melly Howell; and he went home.

CHAPTER III.

TANGLED HALYARDS.

It was a rather sober-faced pair of young men who went together to the private office of the Ormsby Machine Works on the morning following Melly Howell's return to Middlesboro. After a night's interval, Tom's plan of salvation for the crippled business loomed much larger on the side of the dif-

ficulties than it had in the night-before flush of inspiration. And as for Melly, the porch-step clash with flaming patriotism personified by Margie Ormsby had given a militant outthrust to his square jaw and made him rather brittle of speech, even with Tommy Ormsby.

Nevertheless, the forenoon was not wasted. A circular telegram, diplomatically worded by the "gosling" lawyer, went out to the various customer railroads, stating the fact of Mr. Thomas Ormsby's sudden breakdown in health, and asking for a formal release from all contracts. Next, a confidential inquiry was sent to Washington, tendering the Machine Works as a factor in the government industrial mobilization, stating its capacity and capabilities, and asking what steps should be taken to make it available.

"That's about all we can do until the replies begin to come in," said the brevet attorney; "that, and to keep old John Grimsby's ears plugged when he happens to turn them in this direction. How did you find your father this morning?"

"Pretty badly off," said Tommy gloomily. "It isn't serious, in the sense that he is likely to lose his life, or anything of that sort; but the doctor tells me that it will be weeks, or maybe months, before he can come back to business."

"Doctor Trimmell has the case?"

"Oh, sure; family physician, and all that, and dad wouldn't hear of having anybody else. I drove him back from the hospital this morning, and he says what dad needs most is to get entirely away from business and completely out of reach of it; spoke of a sea voyage, if it could be arranged, as about the proper thing."

"And the way matters stand it can't very well be arranged," was the regretful rejoinder.

"Wait," said Tommy; and thereupon proceeded to unfold his plan of taking the Ormsby yacht around to Norfolk to offer it as a patrol boat for the naval reserve. "You see how it fits in," he concluded. "If we can contrive to stand the Works on a going basis, with Randall in charge, I'll propose the trip, taking mother and Margie along, and the doctor, too, if he'll consent to go."

"And Allie?" queried Howell.

Tommy grinned. "Naturally! I couldn't hope to persuade the doctor to go unless his

daughter were included in the invitation. Anything wrong with that?"

Melly Howell answered the grin with a thoughtful frown.

"Nothing; if things turn out before you go so that you can tell Allie why you are not enlisting on the spot."

"But I'll be on my way to enlist when we go."

As Tommy had done the night before in the same place, Melly Howell jumped up and began to pace the floor. After a bit he burst out with the story of the former day's happenings, winding up with the tale of the heart-rending impingement of motives he had suffered at the Ormsby porch steps.

"That was pretty raw!" was the brother's comment. "Marge had no right to say a thing like that."

"Yes, she had—a perfect right!" snapped the lover, refusing to recognize even a brother's privilege of criticizing the loved one. "She sees only what everybody else sees; a great husky football player who is hipped with the notion that he's due to drop dead! Say, Tommy; if you take the *Lucita* around from Jacksonville to Norfolk, I'm going with you, heart or no heart!"

"Good man!" said Tommy with another grin. "And when we reach Norfolk?"

"If you enlist, I'm going in, too—if I have to beat the head off of some medical sharp to make him let me by!"

"Then we'll call that part of it settled. But until the time comes we'll have to stand the gaff. We'll both have to take a fierce lot of back talk from people here for not getting in overnight. But Grimsby must be held off if it takes a leg. Are you game for it?"

"Try me," said Melly grimly; and so the campaign was opened.

Braced as he was for it, the "back talk" heaped upon him from all sides during the next few weeks came many times within an inch of getting Thomas' goat. Old friends, family friends, were passing him in the street with a query in their eyes, and others were more outspoken. "Yellow" was the word oftenest used; and after a little he got so he could see yellow wherever he went. And to prolong the agony, there were vexatious delays in getting the railroad contracts abrogated, and still other, and more vexatious ones, in getting any satisfaction at all out of a swamped and frantically overworked war department at Washington. Neverthe-

less, the desperate problem was edging itself toward a solution, of a sort. After a costly lot of telegraphing, and some few hurried visits to sundry railroad headquarters, Tommy was able to cross most of the bankrupting contracts off the books. Also, taking the trusted Randall halfway into his confidence, he put the Works in shape to turn out small airplane parts, or fuse plugs for shells, or any of the machined products that a hard-pressed war department might need. But still there was no definite answer from Washington, and he did not dare to take his hand from the wheel—or his eye from John Grimsby, banker—long enough to go to the capital in person.

Meanwhile there were more of the whiplashings. Home, with Margie as housekeeper—his mother spent most of her time at the hospital—was like an apartment in a refrigerator. There had been one withering burst of scorn at the first, when Tommy had moodily declined her plan of substituting for him and announced his intention of sticking to the Machine Works "for the present." And after that, the ice box.

To make it worse, Middlesboro, taking the lead in a Middle West which, at that early period, seemed to threaten a certain deliberateness in waking up, was swept by a storm of patriotism. There were rallies and parades, and young men volunteering by the dozen. The conscription act was working its way through Congress, and "draft slacker" was the mildest epithet applied to young fellows who, like Tommy Ormsby and Melly Howell, seemed disposed to wait until they should be dragged in by the scruff of their necks.

Then there was Miss Alicia Trimmell, the doctor's daughter. They had been engaged, more or less, Tommy and Alicia, since Alicia's graduation from the high school. It had been what Middlesboro called a "sensible" courtship; two young people who had known each other all their lives, and were both of them too modern and too well balanced to be foolishly sentimental or secretive about a thing which was perfectly normal and perfectly patent to everybody.

Now Alicia had taken Tommy's rather vague explanation of the business necessities with a half-startled look in her wide-open gray eyes, but she had said nothing, and it was not until after the town talkers had begun to fling the word "yellow" at Tommy—behind his back—that she broke the barrier

which the vague explanation had built up between them.

"You have changed your mind about the war, Tommy?" she said, one evening when the unwilling slacker, driven from home by the low temperature established by his sister, had taken refuge on the Trimmell porch.

"Not at all," Tommy denied. "It's a righteous war, and we ought to have gone into it long ago."

"That is what you used to say," she returned, with the faintest possible emphasis on the word which put the saying in the past tense.

"It's what I'm saying now."

Silence for a moment, and then, very softly: "Does your business really need you, Tom?"

The question was perfectly admissible, and Tommy knew it. In former years the Ormsbys had taken long vacations, in Florida, cruising among the West Indies, and the like, and the Machine Works, with its clean monopoly of patent rights, had gone on under Superintendent Randall's efficient guidance without a hitch. Tommy took the bull squarely by the horns.

"Some things have happened that I can't talk about, even to you, Allie," he blurted out. "Can't you trust me?"

"Of course I trust you. But—but people are saying such dreadful things about you, Tommy, dear!"

"Don't I know it? Haven't I plenty of friends of the sort that'll come and tell me kindly what people are saying? I've got to stand for it. Dad is sick, and—and—well, I've just got to stand for it; that's all."

The pretty young woman who had earned the epithet "sensible" in her home town said no more; but the barrier was up again, higher than ever. Tommy didn't reduce the height of it appreciably when he spoke once more in riddles.

"Your father thinks dad ought to take a sea voyage. I'm trying to get things knocked into shape so that I can take him for a run in the *Lucita*. I shan't dare do that unless I can persuade your father to go along. I'm counting on you to help me, Allie."

"A pleasure trip," she said faintly; "at such a time as this?"

"Call it that, if you like. I can't make it any plainer, just now."

The pretty, wide-open eyes grew suddenly

thoughtful, and if the light had been better, Tommy might have seen sober shadows gathering in them.

"Old as he is, father is talking about trying to get into the medical reserve," she answered. "I don't believe he would care to go in the *Lucita*, much as he would like to go and take care of your father."

"It wouldn't be for long," pleaded Tommy, desperately. "And he has already half promised me to go."

"If he is willing, I shan't put anything in the way," was the quiet reply; and thereby another layer was added to the built-up barrier.

It was two days later that matters precipitated suddenly. Immediately after his daily hospital visit Tommy Ormsby sought out Howell in the "gosing" lawyer's offices in Temple Court.

"It has come to a head," he announced grimly. "Doctor Trimmell says we've simply got to get dad away from here, and do it now. I've been telling dad all sorts of soothing-sirup things about the business, but he knows how it was left when he smashed down, and while he's right here in town with it, there isn't going to be any improvement."

"Well?" said the brevet legal adviser. "What have you done?"

"A lot of things. I've wired Sarskjjoeld, our old Swedish sailing master, to pick up a crew and go to Jacksonville to get the *Lucita* ready for sea—did that a week ago. Beyond that, I've made mother and Margie understand that we've got to go. Doctor Trimmell will go with us, to take care of dad, and, of course, Allie will go along, too."

"And the business; any new developments in that?"

"Yes; we're out of the railroad tangle, at last, and Briggs has been working like a dog on the collections—past-due dead horses and all that. He has scraped up money enough to finance the trip, and enough more to keep the Works jogging along for the time. Lastly, I've seen Banker Grimsby and have bought the privilege of taking dad away for a few weeks."

"Bought it—how?"

"With money—a payment on those notes. Randall was my good angel. I haven't told him any more than I had to, but he's wise to the situation just the same, wise and loyal. Some years ago he put a chunk of his sav-

ings into Bethlehem Steel. You know what the war has done to that stock. Randall slipped up to Chicago the other day and borrowed on it; borrowed money and gave it to me and told me to go fling another handful of dust into old John Grimsby's eyes."

"Fine!" said Melly Howell. "Now, how about Washington?"

"There was a letter this morning from Craig. He says things are still in confusion, but are getting themselves straightened out after a fashion. He went to the department and found our letters buried a mile deep in the unanswered files. In spite of that, he says the prospects are good; that if I can turn up in person inside of the next two or three weeks, he'll put me next to somebody who has orders to place. That fits in with our plan like the shoe on a horse's foot!"

"And the plan is still the same as we've talked it?"

"Precisely. We all leave for Jacksonville to-night. After we get to sea, where it will be perfectly safe to talk, I'll call a family council, tell all the things we've been keeping dark, and get dad's permission to make the government a present of the *Lucita*. Then we'll dawdle along up the coast to Norfolk, and after the Washington business is settled, you and I will break into the naval reserve, if we have to go as common sailors. I understand Bob Hazard is on station duty in Hampton Roads, and he'll lend us a hand. How does that strike you?"

"Right—all but one little detail. With your kind permission, I'll take the other route and join you at Jacksonville. I—to tell the blank truth, Tom, I don't think I'm quite equal to riding forty-eight hours or so in a train with Margie while she still thinks I'm trying to flunk my country."

"Oh, shucks!" said Tommy; but he made no other objection, and so it was arranged,

CHAPTER IV.

THE "LUCITA" CLEARS.

Though Mr. Thomas Ormsby, senior, had been fond of asserting, in his quiet way, that he was not Pittsburgh rich, he had been far from economical when it came to adding an ocean-going yacht to the Ormsby vacation luxuries. But for the ample proportions and high-speed motors of the *Lucita* Tom, junior, had been chiefly responsible, averring that since they were going in for an utter extravagance, they might as

well buy comfort and celerity with the same check.

Hence, the trim little ship, built on the model of an ocean racer, all white enamel and polished mahogany from stem to stern, presented a handsomely nautical appearance as she lay at her berth on the Jacksonville river front, taking in stores. Steering wide of the motor-craft conventions, her builders had given her a liner's bridge and superstructure, with the crew's quarters forward, commodious cabin and stateroom accommodations amidships, and a sheltered promenade deck aft. Aft the bridge an oval-sectioned exhaust funnel helped out the ocean-steamer design, which was topped off and completed by a pair of slender steel masts carrying signal yards and a wireless.

As for the wireless, the merest apprentice economist would have pronounced it a needless luxury. In her peregrinations with the family the *Lucita* had made no oversea voyages, and her crew had never included a wireless operator. But the installation had served as a plaything when there were young people aboard, and both Tom, junior, and his sister had become amateurs; Tom a rather indifferent "plug" operator, and Margie, who did thoroughly most of the things she undertook, a fairly skillful "sender" and a passable "receiver."

In accordance with the instructions telegraphed by Tom, junior, Captain Ole Sarskjold, the Swedish ex-tramp skipper who had served as the *Lucita's* navigator on a former cruise, had proceeded by train from New York to Jacksonville. Construing his orders to suit himself, he took his crew with him; two sailors with rather Germanish names—Leitbold and Hansburger—his crippled nephew, Lars Larson, for the engine room; a low-browed, chauffeurish-looking fellow named Hartzig for Larson's assistant; and lastly, to make the language of the little ship truly polyglot, a Greek cook with a name unspellable and equally unpronounceable, and a young Madeira Islander, as handsome as one of Velasquez's peasant models, for cabin steward.

Though Skipper Sarskjold had been given the exact number of people he was to provide for, and the probable length of the intended voyage, it was remarked by the bright young shipping clerk who superintended the delivery of the cabin stores that the yacht was provisioning as if for a voyage to Rio. Its refrigerators were well filled, its

small ice-making plant was overhauled, and in addition to the regular fuel supply in the tanks, a considerable number of barrels, all bearing the stenciled brand of a great oil company, were taken aboard and stowed in the hold.

In the flight from Middlesboro the Ormsby schedule called for a morning arrival in Jacksonville. The journey was made without incident, and on time, though the invalid was exhausted enough to be glad to go to a hotel and rest when the Florida city was reached. As soon as he could escape, Tom, junior, went back to the railroad station and got there in time to welcome Melly Howell, who had kept his promise of coming by a different route.

"Everything all right, so far?" was the late comer's first question.

"Right as right. Dad's a bit way-worn, but we've got him in a dark cool room at a hotel, and he's chirking up visibly at the thought of getting to sea."

Howell's next query was a purely personal one. "You didn't, by any chance, hold your 'family council' on the way down, did you, Tom?"

"No; dad wasn't in any condition to take part in it, and Marge shut herself up in a book. Besides, I didn't dare to spring it too soon. Dad's pretty stubborn when you get him going, and in his weakened state it would be just like him to think he had to go back to Middlesboro and take hold of the new scheme with his own hands. That wouldn't do at all. We'll wait until we are fairly at sea and it is too late to turn back. I guess you and I can stand the racket a few hours longer."

"When do we sail?"

"I don't know, yet. I haven't seen Sarskjold. But the yacht ought to be ready and waiting."

But oddly enough, as they found when they went to the wharf, the *Lucita* was not ready. True, the stores were aboard, and everything was shipshape above decks and in the cabin and on the bridge. But in the engine hold Larson and his helper had the starboard motor down, with the multitudinous parts arranged like pieces of a Chinese puzzle on the floor. The skipper explained.

"Ve turn her over few tame and she gets warm on the bearings. Ay don't vould laik to go to sea ven she gets warm on the bearings. Lars, he bane tune her opp, and ve get out dis efening."

The delay didn't count for much, since it could be used to good purpose for the invalid. Besides, there were clearance papers to be obtained, and the formalities of the port regulations to be complied with. At the port collector's office a good many questions were asked, but Tommy was able to answer them all satisfactorily. There being no special reason to maintain secrecy with a United States official so many miles distant from Middlesboro and Banker Grimsby, he explained fully the double object of the voyage.

"Fine!" said the official, when he had been told what Tom hoped to do with the yacht. "We've had an eye on her for some time, and wondered if your father would be willing to turn her in as a unit in the coast patrol. She's stanch enough to carry a four-incher—two of them, for that matter. You're clearing to-day?"

"This evening, yes."

"You'll take the inside course, I suppose—or do you draw too much?"

"We could do it for the greater part, so far as our draft is concerned, but for my father's sake, we want to make it a real sea voyage. Is there any war reason why we shouldn't?"

The official smiled. "The usual sea stories," he said. "You can hear anything you like if you care to listen to the talk that drifts into port. We've already had a submarine and at least two German raiders operating off the Bahamas—in the imagination of some of the coastwise skippers."

Ormsby and Melly Howell laughed. They had both cruised enough to know how to discount sea gossip. It would be time enough to take the alarm when some government vessel should give it.

The day in Jacksonville, like the rail journey from Middlesboro, passed without incident. There was some little additional shopping to do, and the three women did it. Obeying an impulse as foreign to his nature as anything could be, Melly Howell kept out of the way; went early to the wharf and was aboard the yacht when the other members of the party drove down. Even then he kept out of sight; was in the engine hold, looking on while Larson put the finishing touches to the reassembled starboard motor, what time Tommy and the doctor were putting the invalid to bed in the owner's stateroom.

It lacked little more than an hour of sun-

set when the pilot came aboard and the *Lucita*, under the thrust of her twin screws, backed away from her moorings to make the turn in the river. Howell went on deck by way of the forward hatch. The yacht was pointing her sharp nose toward the ship channel, with Sarskjold and the pilot on the bridge. The stowaway—he had been calling himself that and some other opprobrious names—stole a cautious look aft. The promenade deck was empty save for a single figure; the figure of a young woman standing at the port rail, looking out upon the river-front panorama which was just beginning to pass itself in review.

Howell paused just long enough to make sure that the figure at the rail was not that of the doctor's daughter. He would willingly have postponed his entrance upon the scene—any scene with Margie Ormsby in it—until after Tommy had had a chance to explain things in the family council. Since this was impossible, he was thankful for a chance to meet Margie first, and alone.

She manifested no surprise at all when she looked and found him standing beside her. During the weeks which had followed the clash at the porch steps they had met often enough, but the old-time chummy relations had not been resumed—couldn't very well be while one of them was playing the part of the ice in the ice box to a slacking brother, and was more than suspecting that the other slacker was aiding and abetting the brother in the disgraceful chase of the business dollar.

"So you are going on the pleasure trip, too, are you?" she said, glancing up at him calmly.

"If—if you are still calling it a pleasure trip," he stammered.

"What else is it—for everybody but daddy?"

"I wish you could trust me—for just about half an inch at a time, Margie!" he pleaded reproachfully.

"It isn't a matter of trust," she answered quite coolly. And then: "I don't wonder that you and Tom wanted to get away from Middlesboro. I was glad to leave, myself."

He was silent; there seemed to be absolutely nothing left to say. After a moment she went on:

"I suppose you have come to propose some sort of a *modus vivendi*, as you lawyers call it. I'll agree with you perfectly that it isn't worth while for us to advertise our

differences to the others while we are shut up here together on the yacht, and——"

"Oh, I say!" he broke in. "If there were really anything the matter with my heart, you'd—— Won't you give me twenty-four hours longer, Margie? It's all I'll ask."

"What is going to happen in twenty-four hours? Will another day turn you back into the man I used to believe you were, Melly?"

"Maybe it will—er—by Jove, I *hope* it will!"

She shook her pretty head rather mournfully. "I'm afraid it can't. When things are once broken they can't be so easily mended."

"But this thing can," he protested eagerly.

"Then tell me what this trip means—besides getting daddy away from Middlesboro."

This was forbidden ground, or he chose to think it so, and his answer was a clumsy evasion—for a beginning lawyer.

"Er—what makes you think it means anything?"

"I don't think; I know. I've lived with my brother a good many years. I want to know what it is that he is ashamed to tell me."

"What do you think it could mean?"

"I can tell you the plain inference. Everybody in Middlesboro knows that you and he have been planning some profiteering scheme that you are afraid or ashamed to talk about. Isn't that true?"

"What an idea!"

"Answer me: Isn't it true?"

"Well, if we did?—plan, I mean. Don't we have to consider the butcher and the baker and the grocer, even in war times?"

"What I want to know is if this voyage has anything to do with the plan."

He tried another tack.

"Margie, dear; you're on your father's yacht, and your brother is in command of it. If I knew it was going to be turned into a pirate ship, flying the Jolly Roger, would you expect me to be the one to tell you about it?"

She looked him over with cool disdain, or something that very closely resembled it.

"That is a rather brutal way of telling me to mind my own business, Melly," she said crisply. Then: "You asked for twenty-four hours—they are yours. For that length of time I'll—suspend sentence; is that the proper legal phrase?" Then, as if to show

him that the gap was bridged, temporarily and technically, at least: "Now, I wish you'd please tie my shoe. It's been coming untied all day."

It was while the shoe-tying was in process that Tommy came out of the after cabin and went forward to climb to the bridge. Though it is only fourteen miles or thereabouts, as the bird flies, from Jacksonville to the open sea, it is a considerably greater distance by river; and the channel, generously widened and deepened as it has been of late years, still calls for measurably reduced speed. It was while the *Lucita* was circling the first of the bends below the city that Tommy looked back toward the disappearing river front.

In a berth not very far from the one the *Lucita* had lately left a small steamship appeared to be getting up steam. Black smoke was rolling from her funnel to make an orange disk of the setting sun. At the backward glance, Tommy saw a string of flags flutter up to her signal yard. With no special reason for doing so, Tommy called the Swedish sailing master's attention.

"What boat is that back yonder; the one that is firing up in such a hurry?" he asked.

Oddly enough, as he thought, Sarskjöld seemed more or less disturbed. But he answered calmly enough.

"Ay bane tank das de revenue cutter, yaas," he drawled.

"And the signal flags; who on earth is she trying to signal to—while she is still at her moorings?"

The skipper's answer to this was a mere unintelligible grunt, and Tommy, who knew from past experience how hard it was to make Sarskjöld talk when he didn't feel like talking, let the sailing master step back to his place beside the pilot. For himself, however, and still for no reason that he could have set in words, he kept an eye on the ship with the smoking funnel and the string of signals fluttering in the landward breeze.

Developments, such as they were, followed quickly. The first was a gradual quickening of the *Lucita's* speed; and a minute or so later, just as the bend of the river was about to blot out the view to the rear, Tommy saw the small steamship back away from her wharf, saw a white wreath of steam encircle the smoking stack, and heard the drone of a distant siren.

Being only an amateur "jacky," with a strong desire to grow into a real one, Tommy Ormsby couldn't read the message of the colored flags, and was far from suspecting that the faintly heard drone of the siren was the navy code signal to "Heave to!" But if he had suspected it, a little tableau which confronted him when, losing sight of the harbor and its shipping, he turned to face forward, would have given him something else to think about. The miniature chart house which contained the heavy-weather steering gear and the wireless set shut off the rearward view of the two men who stood in front of it. As Tommy turned, the weather-beaten and bewiskered river pilot was passing a bottle, from which he had evidently just taken a drink, back to the sailing master. And in the act of dropping the flat bottle into his pocket, Sarskjold moved the index of the engine-room dial up for more speed.

Tommy kept to his own end of the bridge and stared ahead, frowning thoughtfully. This bottle business threw an entirely new side light on the ex-tramp captain. Why was Sarskjold, hitherto figuring as a grim fanatic on the subject of temperance, plying a strange pilot with whisky and patently bribing him to break the speed regulations governing the movement of vessels in the river channel?

It was with a feeling of suddenly increased responsibility that young Ormsby kept his place on the bridge. Belonging strictly to his own generation—a generation of young business men which doesn't drink, and is alertly suspicious of the man who does—Tommy frowned again and tightened his grip on the bridge rail. With three women and a sick man aboard, it was no light thing to put to sea with a navigator who carried a pocket flask. Clearly, Sarskjold—this newly side-lighted Sarskjold—would bear watching.

CHAPTER V.

A RACE TO THE SWIFT.

For a good half hour and more after the city water front had dropped astern the *Lucita* seemed to have the ship channel all to herself. Indeed, it was not until the jetties at the river's mouth were in sight that Tommy Ormsby, glancing aft, saw the little ship with the smoking funnel forging along some two or three miles in the

rear, far enough away now so that any signals she might be displaying could scarcely be distinguished without the help of binoculars.

Still far from suspecting that the movements of the rearward vessel had anything to do with the *Lucita*, Tommy was again watching Sarskjold out of the tail of his eye. For the last ten minutes the big Swede had been shifting back and forth on his own end of the bridge. There had been no more passings of the bottle, and the pilot in his place at the wheel in front of the chart house was attending strictly to business. The sun had set, but in the crimson after-glow the pilot's boat, rocking on the ground swell beyond the bar, was plainly to be seen.

Tommy Ormsby glanced aft again. The rearward vessel was coming on at a smart clip, fresh volumes of smoke tumbling from her funnel seeming to indicate that she had her forced draft on. After many years of harbor-improvement work the passage over the St. John's River bar has been widened and deepened to a fairway. Once in line between the jetties, the pilot moved the engine-room signal to "full speed" and the *Lucita* suddenly took a white bone in her teeth and shot ahead like a destroyer going on an S O S call. Five minutes of this brought her abreast of the bobbing pilot boat, with the big twin propellers dragging to check her headway.

"There you are," said the whiskered one to the sailing master. "You said you wanted to get into blue water before dark, and I made it for you." With no more ado, he whipped down the ladder and over the side to his tender, which had hooked on and was towing at the yacht's forward gangway. Then, for the first time, apparently, he saw the revenue cutter and shouted up to the skipper on the *Lucita's* bridge.

"Hey!—that's a government boat back yonder and she's makin' signals."

Evidently, as Tommy thought, Sarskjold either didn't hear or failed to understand. Almost before the pilot's boat had been given a chance to cast off, the yacht shot ahead again at full speed. Before Tommy could interpose, his sister had come forward and climbed to the bridge.

"What ship is that back there making signals to us, Captain Ole?" she asked.

Sarskjold, at the wheel; did not turn his head, with the face that looked as if it

might have been hewn out of the rough with a hand ax.

"Ay tank she ent signal us," he offered.

"But there is a string of flags flying, and a man on the bridge wigwagging."

The wooden-faced skipper made no reply to this. He seemed to be devoting his entire attention to getting the last wheel turn of speed out of the *Lucita*. Miss Margie Ormsby was not of those who are to be put off by the deaf-and-dumb method. Slipping into the combination chart house and wireless room she sat down at the instruments and quickly clamped the earpieces over her head. Tommy saw the move and joined her.

The young woman opened the key and the sizz-z of the spark followed. As has been said, Tommy knew international Morse well enough to read it when the sending was sufficiently slow, and he made out that his sister was answering a call, giving the yacht's name and its owner's. While this was being done, Tommy, having his eyes free, and happening to look out through the semicircular windows of the chart house, saw the skipper pick up the flexible speaking tube connecting with the engine room and put it to his lips.

There was nothing in the incident to make it record itself as significant. Margie had closed her key and was writing on a pad. Tommy bent over her and read the words as they appeared under the pencil point. They came slowly, for she had flashed the signal which told that she was an amateur.

"Why—haven't—you—answered—signals—and—wireless? Heave—to—and—let—us—send—a—boat."

Tommy stepped to the chart-house door and gave the order promptly.

"Heave her to, Captain Ole. That revenue cutter wants to speak us."

By this time the evening dusk was lying upon the face of the season like a dusty haze, and the fast yacht, shooting seaward at dispatch-boat speed, had lost its pursuer in the murky distances. Sarskjold obeyed the order at once, turning his engine-room index back to "Stop." The wireless was buzzing again, and Tommy turned to look over his sister's shoulder. Once more the pencil point was tracing words on the pad, and again he read them.

"Heave—to—and—show—a—light. You—have—dangerous—criminal—on—board. Penalty—of—the—law—"

The pencil stopped abruptly. The young

woman opened her key and jiggled it. There was no response. The installation had suddenly gone dead. At the same instant, Tommy Ormsby realized that the *Lucita* was not stopping. When he darted out to the bridge he found Leitbold, one of the fore-deck men, at the wheel.

"Where is the skipper?" he snapped.

"He has gone below, sir," returned the man, politely enough. "Something has gone wrong with the engine-room signal and the dynamo."

The low growling of the motors was stopping at last, and Ormsby turned to look in the direction in which the revenue cutter must lie. The night had fallen quickly. Far off to the westward the beam of a searchlight was playing, but the light itself could not be seen. It seemed incredible that the *Lucita* could have made such a wide offing in such a short time, but Tommy knew the speed capacity of the little ship. With the stopping of its engines the yacht lost way and was presently lying to, swaying gently to the lift of the seas. After waiting impatiently for the skipper to return, Tommy put his head through the chart-house door.

"I'm going below to find out what has become of Sarskjold," he said, in tones too low to be overheard by the man at the wheel. "Take care of those two messages and don't show them to anybody."

The skipper was found in the engine hold, together with Larson and the mechanic, Hartzig. Hartzig had the casing off of the small independently driven dynamo which supplied current for the signals, lights and the wireless, and was doing something to the commutators. The engine room was lighted feebly by means of a small emergency storage battery. Larson was just backing out of the starboard shaft tunnel with a cord light and a broken bolt in his hands.

The square-faced sailing master was growling in his own peculiar brand of English over the heaped-up ill luck. The dynamo had a short circuit, and they could have no lights until it was repaired. And the "warm" thrust bearing on the right-hand propeller shaft had broken a bolt. Asked how long the yacht was likely to lie crippled, the answer was optimistic. Half an hour would probably suffice in which to make the repairs.

Ormsby went on deck frowningly thought-

ful. The accidents which had simultaneously disabled the motive power, and cut out the lights and the wireless, were too opportune—much too opportune. And with the knowledge that there was a traitor on board, it was needless to attribute them to ill luck or chance. A glance around the horizon showed him that the searchlight beam had disappeared. Had the revenue cutter turned back to Jacksonville? Or was it steaming still farther away in search of the yacht?

Howell, Margie and the doctor's daughter were on the after deck when Tommy Ormsby reached it. Dinner was ready to be served, but it had to be postponed because there were no lights. Tommy explained the reason for the darkness, adding that they'd probably have the electricity again in a short time; and at this the two young women said they would go and tell the others.

Left with Howell, Tommy Ormsby lost no time in briefing the real and more serious situation, telling Howell what the chase by the revenue cutter had meant, and repeating the messages which had come over the wireless.

"A criminal on board?" said Melly; "one of our crew?" Then: "Wait a minute; there's only one kind of a criminal that would make the commander of a government boat chase us. Had you thought of that?"

Ormsby nodded. "A German dynamiter, or something of that sort, I suppose. I'm just wondering what we'd better do."

"Find the man first; which one is it?"

"Your guess is as good as anybody's. What little evidence we have would seem to point to Sarskjold. But it may be some member of the crew. They're all foreigners, and three of them have German names."

"How well do you know the skipper?"

"Dad knows him better than I do. We had him with us as navigator a year ago last winter. Dad had him looked up in the shipping records. The report, as I remember it, was to the effect that he was an honest old squarehead, and a good seaman, but that he had had a piece of bad luck which had cost him his master's certificate."

"Do you eliminate him?"

"I don't know. He was on the bridge with us, and he knew Marge was working the wireless. But he couldn't have known

what was being flashed back and forth. It looks more like Larson or Hartzig; only they couldn't have known what was going on on the bridge."

Howell took a moment to think about it.

"The simplest thing is to put back to Jacksonville and let the government people do the identifying," he suggested.

"Yes; but there's a string tied to that. The man who is wanted—whether it's Sarskjold or one of the others—would know, right off the bat, what was coming. If he's desperate enough, he might open the sea cocks for us."

"That's so. We mustn't take any chances—with your father and the women aboard. What else had you thought of?"

"Something like this: we'll idle along up the coast to-night, just as we planned to do. By to-morrow morning we ought to be off Charleston, and I'll make some excuse for putting in. Then we can get in touch quietly with the secret-service people and let them come aboard and get their man."

"That looks all right to me," said Melly Howell; and so it was decided.

Soon after this the lights came on and dinner was announced. Coincidentally, Sarskjold came aft to ask for his sailing orders.

"Lay your course up the coast and take it easy," said Tommy. "We're not trying to run circles around anything this trip."

"Goot," said the sailing master; and when he was out of hearing, Ormsby passed a word of caution to Howell. "Marge and you and I know of this; we needn't hand it on to the others."

The first dinner on board the *Lucita* was scarcely a triumph of sociability. True, the Greek cook proved his worth, and the service of the handsome Madeira boy was flawless; but three of the six people at table answered the genial doctor's sallies at random, and the doctor's daughter, taking her cue subconsciously from Tommy Ormsby's abstraction, was equally unresponsive. Placid Mrs. Ormsby was chiefly concerned about her invalid, and excused herself early to go and see if he had everything he wanted.

Shortly after dinner, the fatigues of the rail journey accounting therefor, the women disappeared into their staterooms; and a little later, Doctor Trimmell, who had smoked a cigar with the two young men on the after deck, also turned in with the remark that he was going to enjoy the first night in many

when he wouldn't have to listen for his house call bell.

It was after the doctor had gone, and while the two he had left behind were lounging in their respective deck chairs and looking out over the yacht's stern at the glow of phosphorescence spreading itself fanlike in the vessel's wake, that a limping figure, unseen by either of the pair at the taffrail, stole aft and entered the darkened main cabin. In the cabin the figure sprang upon the cleared dining table and knelt thereon to reach something in the cabin ceiling. The light from the tiny transom over the door of the doctor's stateroom left the kneeling man in shadow, revealing only a pair of deft hands and a screw driver busily at work.

A few minutes after the limping cabin intruder had finished his job and vanished, the two young men turned in. As they were passing through the cabin Tommy Ormsby flicked the lights on and glanced up at the telltale compass let into the ceiling.

"Northeast, eight degrees east," he said. "Sarskjold is keeping well off the coast. But as long as we're trying to kill time it won't make any difference."

Thus the amateur young sailorman, reading the course from the telltale. But if he had known what had been done to the compass within the last half hour, or had thought to take a real seaman's glance at the heavens before retiring, there might have been another story to tell. Also, if either he or Melly Howell had been wakeful, as they were not, they could hardly have failed to note the gradually quickening beat of the motors which began a little while after their stateroom light went out; began and increased until the *Lucita* was ripping through the heaving seas at her best speed.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HIGH-RIDING TRAMP.

Through the hours of darkness, with the square-faced Swedish ex-tramp captain standing watch, off and on, with one of his fore-deck men, the *Lucita* foamed along on her course. Some hour or so beyond midnight the little wind there was went down leaving the sea like a black and undulating mirror over which the fast yacht rushed with a hammock-swing motion that was like a lullaby.

Just before dawn the same limping figure which had invaded the cabin the night be-

fore made another visit to the precincts which were supposed to be sacred to the owner's party. Again the busy screw driver did its appointed task and the figure vanished, to reappear a few minutes later on the bridge. It was Larson, and after exchanging a few words in his native tongue with Sarskjold, he went below.

A half hour passed, and from time to time, as the light increased in the east, the sailing master held the wheel by leaning against it and swept the horizon with the glass. When the light was fully come the horizons showed no land, but it immediately proved that the yacht was no longer alone on the heaving waters. Off the port quarter and well astern, a black-hulled tramp was wallowing along, steaming on a course nearly paralleling that of the *Lucita*. Still farther away, and on the starboard quarter, was another vessel, this one steaming in the opposite direction.

The sailing master held the two strangers, one after the other, in the field of the binoculars. The tramp was apparently in ballast; she stood quite high out of the water, and was making fairly good speed for her build. The other ship, on the contrary, was plainly a regular-line cargo carrier with her holds well filled: she was proceeding at the slow grind of the heavily laden, with little or no lift to the heaving of the seas.

Sarskjold had the glass still at his eyes when Larson appeared again. "Quick!" he said, as his round bullet head came above the bridge grating; "they are getting up!"

Under a swift spin of the wheel the yacht swept a wide half circle to starboard, coming around on a course exactly opposite to that which she had been steering, and bringing the two sighted vessels ahead and to port and starboard, reversing their positions in reference to the *Lucita*. At the same time the speed was reduced. Hence it came about, when Tommy Ormsby and Howell mounted to the bridge a few minutes later, the yacht was loafing along at half speed, with the first red flush of the sunrise just beginning to show a few points off the starboard bow.

"Queer how a fellow gets turned around at sea," Tommy was saying. "A little while ago, when I was taking my bath, I could have sworn the sun was going to rise in the west." Then to Sarskjold: "Where are we this morning, Captain Ole—somewhere off Charleston?"

The sailing master shook his head. "Ay

tank we bane good ways from Charleston yet."

Tommy Ormsby was going to ask why, but just then he caught sight of the high-waisted tramp to starboard.

"Hello!" he exclaimed; "that fellow is going about. Reckon he's forgotten something and is going back after it?"

"It looks more as if he were heading for that other fellow—away over there to the westward," said Howell.

It was at this conjuncture that Margaret Ormsby came up to the bridge, with the genial old doctor at her heels. "Fine large morning," was the physician's greeting to the young men. "What is there in this world any more peaceful and soothing than a good-weather sunrise at sea!"

"It's peaceful enough just here," said Tommy; and Howell asked how the doctor's patient had rested. While the three men were talking, Miss Ormsby had taken up the ship's glass and was focusing it upon the tramp.

"Why doesn't that ship show what nation she belongs to?" she asked; and when there was no reply: "What are those queer things at the bow? They look like the high bulwarks on the Lake Michigan boats."

Again lacking a reply—nobody else could as yet make out the strangenesses revealed by the glass—she presently began again: "That's curious; she is carrying a deckload of something—something that looks like—I don't know just what it does look like; dark-colored sacks of something scattered around everywhere. And on the bridge—there are a lot of men on the bridge and they're in uniform!"

During the interval which had elapsed since the *Lucita* had so suddenly reversed her course, with the mysterious tramp so singularly doing the same, the deep-laden freighter had forged ahead; and now the three vessels were converging upon a common point.

Margaret Ormsby had scarcely uttered her excited exclamation before a string of signal flags shot up to the tramp's yard. The young woman thrust the binoculars into Melly Howell's hands and darted into the chart house to get the code book. "It's for us!" she gasped, when she had hurriedly fluttered the leaves and found the phrase corresponding to the signal. "It says, 'Yacht to port: stop immediately and lay to.'"

Sarskjold did not wait for Tommy

Ormsby to give the formal order. At the word "stop" he grabbed for the engine-room signal, and after a few diminishing surges the *Lucita* lost headway and lay swinging gently to the rolling of the swell.

What followed figured for the watchers on the yacht's bridge like a thunderclap for which there has been no warning flash. While they looked on in shocked bewilderment the line of signal flags came down from the tramp's yard and the German naval ensign was quickly brought out. At the same instant the false bulwarks at the bow disappeared with a clattering of iron upon iron, the curious deckload Margaret Ormsby had seen through the glass sprang alive as a swarming crew, a battery of heavy guns was revealed and a shot was fired.

Coincident with the thudding thunder of the gun they saw the shell strike and explode on board the freighter; saw the wreckage fly from the superstructure and the gray-painted funnel crumple and fall, its collapse followed by a rising cloud of white and the roar of escaping steam. Either by luck or good marksmanship the range had been obtained with fatal accuracy, and the single shell crippled the ship beyond any hope of escape. None the less, the cripple showed her colors—the British flag—and her teeth. Her bow gun spat fire and a shell whined. It fell short, and was followed by others in quick succession, but none of them reached the mark.

Having the range of its helpless quarry the tramp raider stood off and hurled two more of the heavy shells at the target. They were both direct hits, and at the second, which tore a great hole in the freighter's bow plates, the victim's gun was silenced, the flag of defiance came fluttering down, and the onlookers on the *Lucita's* bridge saw the crew, or what was left of it, making frantic efforts to lower the boats.

"It's murder!" gasped Howell, gripping the bridge rail as if he would crush it; and Margaret Ormsby's eyes filled suddenly, and she could no longer see the struggling figures on the distant ship. "Their tackle is fouled and they can't get their boats over the side!" gritted Tommy Ormsby. He was just about to take a chance—all the chances—and order Sarskjold to send the yacht to the rescue when it became apparent that the raider's commander meant to be merciful, after his kind. Already a motor launch had been stripped of its masking tarpaulins and

was dropping to the water with its officer and men in their places. There was a swift race across the intervening seas, and presently the launch was seen leaving the wreck with two of the freighter's boats which had finally been gotten over the side in tow.

It was while the wounded and unhurt survivors of the freighter's crew were being taken aboard of the German that the end came for the unnamed victim ship. There was an ominous slanting of the masts, and the people on the *Lucita's* bridge fancied they could hear the gurgling rush of water through the gaping hole in the bow plates. Slowly the angle of the decks increased; then the stern rose dripping and with a sudden plunge the vessel was gone.

"My God!—just like that!" said Melly Howell; and the young woman beside him bit her lip and choked back a sob.

But now the *Lucita's* turn had come and there was no time for horror-stricken comment on the fate of the unknown freighter. For the motor launch was once more leaving the raider's side, and this time it was headed for the yacht.

CHAPTER VII.

HOSTAGES.

Quickly shouldering his responsibility as his father's lieutenant, Tommy Ormsby tried to discount the menace of the approaching visitation.

"They won't sink us," he thrust in hastily. "Thank God, we haven't a U-boat commander to deal with. The captain of that tramp cruiser is at least half human or he wouldn't have tried to save the Englishmen. Marge, you go below and stay with dad and mother and Allie. Melly, you and I will meet these fellows and find out what they're going to do to us."

"Not without me," put in the mild-eyed old physician, with a little tightening of his lips; so there were three of them at the after-deck gangway when the launch was boat-hooked to the yacht's side and the officer in command, a wasp-waisted young Prussian with sharp-pointed Hohenzollern mustaches to identify him as a loyal liegeman of the All-Highest, was whipping over the rail, followed by half a dozen armed sailors.

Mindful of his suddenly weighted responsibilities, Tommy Ormsby climbed into the breach with a cheerful, "Good morning,

Herr Lieutenant," but the greeting was churlishly ignored as the officer snapped out, in English of the kind that is learned from the grammars:

"Who are you—and what will you in these seas be doing?"

Tommy explained, or tried to.

"This is the American private yacht *Lucita*, and I am the owner's son. My father is sick, and under advice of his physician, Doctor Trimmell here, we are giving him the benefit of a sea voyage."

"So—a pleasure trip—in this time of the war?" rasped the German. "I will your papers see; quickly, if you please!"

Now the *Lucita* had no papers save the clearance document procured in Jacksonville the previous day, and this Tommy Ormsby drew from his pocket.

The officer read the paper and a light seemed to dawn upon him. "So! It is for Norfolk you think you are bound? That is a mistake, *mein herr*. At this moment you are many kilometers south of Jacksonville. You will your sailing master order to get the yacht under way and lay it alongside of our ship, at once!"

Tommy Ormsby opened his mouth, but for the moment no sound came forth. And when the words did come they were fairly shocked out of him.

"South of Jacksonville?" he exploded. "But that can't be, Herr Lieutenant! We are off Charleston!"

The lieutenant waved a hand as if in supreme contempt of Tommy's nautical knowledge—or his lack of it. "You are more nearly the Bahamas off, Herr Ormsby." Then, with a return of the rasping: "Will you order the yacht under way, or shall I?"

Still too greatly astounded to do much more than gasp, Ormsby shouted the order up to Sarskjold on the bridge. While the yacht was edging up to the raider, towing the motor launch at its after gangway, the officer continued his inquisition.

"Your people; how many do you ship for these—these pleasure trips?" he demanded.

Tommy enumerated his party including the skipper and the members of the crew; and one of the German sailors, acting as orderly, wrote down the names. Then the lieutenant announced his decision.

"I shall on board the *Seeprins* take you—Until then, you and your friend, Herr Howell, will consider yourselves under arrest. Be

so good as to step forward and tell your sailing master that he shall obey orders from me. It is far to land, and to sink your yacht with women on board we do not wish."

Again Tommy obeyed his orders because there didn't seem to be anything else to do, and an armed German sailor went along with him to see that he carried them out to the letter. Still in a daze of astonishment that the *Lucita* should have been overhauled far to the south of Jacksonville instead of to the north, he was constrained, by the presence of his armed guard, to limit himself to the brief order to Sarskjjoeld.

Upon his return to the after deck the officer motioned him over the side and into the towing launch. Melly Howell had been pushed aside and he, also, was under guard. By this time the *Lucita* had come abreast of the raider, lying as near as she could be brought without danger of a collision, and the propellers were dragging to check her headway.

As deftly as if the maneuver had been carefully rehearsed beforehand, a boom with a hoisting sling and grappling hooks swung out over the raider's side. The lieutenant snapped an order to his under officer and four men of the launch's crew ran forward and lifted the yacht's fore hatch, three of them dropping into the hold, and the fourth remaining on deck to bring the grappling hooks down on the run.

From his place in the launch Tommy Ormsby looked on in increasing wonderment. With an inattentive ear he could hear the good doctor pleading with the lieutenant in behalf of his patient, and out of the tail of his eye he saw his sister come out of the cabin and go to stand beside Melly Howell. But the thing that was going on under the swinging boom was what engrossed him.

Following the plunge of the grappling hooks into the *Lucita's* forehold came the sharp clatter of a hoist, and the sling came up with a barrel in the hooks. Tommy recognized it as an oil barrel, and jumped immediately to the conclusion that Sarskjjoeld had laid in an extra supply of fuel oil, and that the cruiser was robbing them of it.

The conclusion held good until the fifth barrel was dangling in the air. Then came a small contretemps not down in the bills. The hoisting gang on the high deck of the cruiser swung the boom a second too soon and the ascending barrel crashed against a

boat davit. The hooks held, but one of the barrel heads was smashed. Out of the broached barrel, instead of the expected gush of fuel oil, came a flat bolt of white cloth to fall with a splash in the sea.

Tommy was more deeply mystified than ever, but apparently his sister was not. Distinctly he heard her say to Melly Howell; with cold scorn in her voice: "So this was what you wanted me to wait twenty-four hours to find out, was it? Perhaps you can tell me why the *Lucita* sailed yesterday with a cargo of air-plane linen hidden in oil barrels and then falls this morning into the hands of a German warship? Was that why we didn't let the revenue cutter overtake us, and why we didn't go back after the engines were repaired?"

Tommy sprang up in the launch to repel the monstrous accusation before it could spread any further. But the German lieutenant got ahead of him. In a trice, Howell was hustled over the yacht's side and into the launch, and Miss Ormsby was curtly ordered to retire to the cabin. The cargo shifting was apparently completed, and in the absence of any one else in authority, the German laid his orders upon Doctor Trimmell.

"Listen, *Mein Herr Doktor*: we shall take your two young men with us, and for the time you are in command of this yacht. If you move without orders, we fire into you. This is war."

This was all there was to it until the launch was hoisted to its place at the cruiser's waist and the two young men found themselves in the presence of the warship's commander. There was a brusque introduction, and the captain took his subaltern aside to hear his report. Followed a short command, veiled as a request.

"If you will do me the honor to step down into my quarters, Herr Ormsby," said the captain, indicating the after companionway; and it was not until after he had begun to descend that Tommy saw that Howell was not going to be permitted to accompany him. In the cabin of the tramp cruiser the commander waved him to a seat.

At his first glimpse of it, Ormsby had thought the captain's face seemed vaguely familiar, and now, as he sat across the table from him, the impression deepened. While he was cudgeling his brain trying to recall where and when he had seen the wide-apart gray eyes with the weary look in them, the

nose with a peculiar slant as if it had once been broken, and the closely cropped beard whitening in a curious ring around the mouth and nowhere else, the nail of recollection was suddenly driven home and clinched.

"In the nature of things we must be very brief, Mr. Ormsby," the captain began, speaking perfectly good English. "The ship we engaged a few minutes ago had a wireless, and, short as the action was, a call for help was sent out. There are none of your warships in this neighborhood, so far as our information goes, but we are taking no risks. Lieutenant von Kaufmann has made his report of what you have told him. Have you anything to add to it?"

"Nothing," said Tommy. "I told your second officer the simple truth. We are out of our course, far out of it, and that I cannot explain. Neither can I tell you why we had ten or a dozen cases of linen in our hold concealed in oil barrels."

A ghost of a smile flitted across the tired face of the commander.

"Perhaps the German intelligence office could explain both of these unaccountable things for you Mr. Ormsby, but the explanation can wait. For the linen we are much obliged; there is great need for it in the fatherland. But let us come to business, as you Americans say. I had no knowledge it was your good father's yacht we were to look for, or that you were to be a family party on board of it. I am sorry that it has proved to be so, yes."

Tommy's eyebrows lifted. "You know my father?" he demanded.

Again the ghost of a smile came and went. "And yourself, as well. For many years yet I sailed in command of a liner between Hamburg and New York. It was some four years since, I think, that you and your father and mother and sister crossed in my ship."

"You are Captain Holtzberg," said Tommy. "I thought I recognized you, but I couldn't be entirely certain. I—I wasn't looking to find you in the imperial navy, you know."

"I am always in the navy—as a reservist," was the crisp reply.

"Well," said Tom, "now that we have arrived at some sort of a starting point, what are you going to do with us, Captain Holtzberg? For myself I ask nothing, and I think I can say the same for Mr. Howell. Your

nation and mine are at war, and Howell and I were meaning to enlist. But on the yacht there is left only a sick man, a good doctor who is too old to fight, and three helpless women—all these at the mercy of some traitor on board who is, directly or indirectly, responsible for our being here this morning."

The ex-liner captain shook his head rather sadly.

"Following my instructions exactly, I should either make prisoners of your people or make them take to the boats, and sink the yacht, Mr. Ormsby."

"Oh, but, captain!" cried Tommy, half starting from his chair; "you are not making war upon helpless noncombatants, are you?"

"That depends. This is war, and we are fighting for our existence. But we needn't argue that point. The question is, what am I to do with you yet? You say you have a—what you call a traitor on board. Do you know who it is?"

"I do not, but I strongly suspect it is the Swedish sailing master, Sarskjöld."

"Then this is what I shall do: I cannot set your people in the yacht free to carry news of us to the nearest American port, and I do not wish to sink your little ship. I shall keep you and your young friend on board the *Seepinz*, and you shall send an order to your doctor, and through him to your sailing master, to keep within hail of us. Later, we shall see what further is to be done."

Most naturally, Tommy would have protested vigorously if he had been given a chance. But the mild-mannered ex-liner captain, who could be mercifully considerate in one breath and a man of iron in the next, gave him no chance.

"But surely you will let me go back and explain to my people!" he gasped, when the captain ordered him curtly to write his note to the doctor.

"There is no need. You will make your letter quickly. In ten minutes yet your dunnage must be aboard. Otherwise we strip the yacht and send it on the bottom. *Vorwaerts!*"

It was all done so quickly as to leave one of the victims, at least, gasping for breath. While he still sat at the cabin table, calling himself hard names for not having taken matters vigorously into his own hands the night before, when he had every assur-

ance that trouble was to be expected, his luggage and Melly Howell's was brought down from the deck above, and the raider began to tremble with the thrust of its propellers. A moment later a German sailor appeared with Melly; and when the door of a small stateroom was closed upon them they realized that they were prisoners of war.

CHAPTER VIII.

AT THE TAIL OF A WAR KITE.

The *Lucita* had got her sailing orders emptorily after Tommy's note to the doctor had been conveyed on board. Catapulted thus violently into the headship of the diminished party on the yacht, the "beloved physician," as all Middlesboro called him, acquitted himself nobly. By training and inclination a man of science and a student, and living the life of a general practitioner in a city that was scarcely more than an overgrown village, he had never had an adventure. But now the adventure had come, he rose to the occasion with a curious and almost exultant feeling of renewed youth.

Sarskjold had kept his place on the bridge, and to the Swedish sailing master the new order was transmitted.

"Our two young men are held as prisoners on board that German ship, Captain Ole, and its commander directs that we follow and keep the *Lucita* within hailing distance. In Mr. Thomas' absence I am in command, and you will accordingly take your orders from me," was the way in which the good doctor took over the reins of authority; and being as unnautical as any landward person could be, it never occurred to him to wonder that the skipper raised no objections and exhibited no surprise at the turn things had taken.

The new order established, with the enemy cruiser leading off on a southerly course and the yacht hanging on her starboard quarter as if at the end of an invisible towline, the doctor groped for more of the reins. In the main cabin, heaped in a corner of a settee and crying quietly into her handkerchief, he found Margie Ormsby. Comforting people being his long suit, he soon got the tears dried, and together they took account of stock.

The young woman outlined the situation between decks. Mrs. Ormsby had been told, and so had Alicia, and they were together

in Alicia's stateroom: grief-stricken, of course, as who wouldn't be? Fortunately, most fortunately, the sick man had slept straight through it all—was still asleep. So he knew nothing of what had happened.

"That simplifies matters somewhat for us," said the doctor encouragingly. "We must get together and agree to keep it from him as long as we can."

"But we can't hope to do that indefinitely," objected the practical daughter.

"No; but we can't tell what a day may bring forth, and every added hour of rest and freedom from worry is an hour gained for your father. I have faith in our two boys, Margie. They'll find a way out of this, somehow."

It was just here that the young woman's self-control threatened to give way again.

"You don't know it all," she faltered, and thereupon she told him all; how Tommy and Melly, from being hot-hearted patriots before war was declared, had suddenly become—well—slackers; that was the only word: how Melly had pleaded his weak heart, and Tommy had given the business excuse, and had finally talked everybody into making this yacht voyage.

"That was partly my doing," said the doctor. "Go on."

Margie did go on. There was some sort of secrecy about the Ormsby business affairs after Tommy took hold. He knew, the doctor did, the business trouble was what had broken daddy down. Well, Tommy and Melly had gone into some kind of a partnership, and they wouldn't tell what they were doing. Then she told of the one radiogram and the part of another that had been received from the revenue cutter the night before. It was all a miserable mystery, and it was only made worse, and considerably darker for the two young men, by what they had just seen—the transfer of a lot of air-plane material from the *Lucita's* hold to the German raider.

The good doctor did his best—which was far from being inconsiderable—toward straightening out the tangle and consoling the tangled one. The Swedish skipper was the villain, and probably the only one. He, Doctor Trimmell, would see to it personally that from this time on the sailing master would do exactly what he was told to do; no more and no less. And in the end they would devise some way of rescuing the

young men, and all live happily ever afterward.

Having done his duty in the cabin, the doctor, with the lately awakened thirst for adventure tingling in his veins, climbed once more to the bridge.

"Sarskjold, you are a great scoundrel," he began, without preface. "You are the man who has got us into all this trouble, turning traitor to the hand that fed you. Do you see this?"—exhibiting a tiny, glass-barreled hypodermic needle—"one prick from this needle and you are a dead man. If anything happens to our young men, or if you don't do your best to get us out of this trap you've set for us—well, that's all; you're no fool, Captain Ole, whatever else you may be."

It is said, doubtless with some truth, that every man has his own pet terror; has picked out the peculiar and particular sort of death that he is most afraid of. Of course, it was only by the merest fantastic quirk of chance that the doctor had hit upon the one vulnerable joint in the hardened old skipper's armor. All his life he had been afraid of doctors; of scalpels and bone saws, operating rooms and hospital beds. A rough, two-fisted sailorman, with a lust for gold and not too many scruples he stared at the little instrument in the doctor's open palm with a gray horror creeping up under the tan on his square-hewn face.

"Sure, doctor! Ay bane going to do all what you tale me to do!" he jerked out; but when he would have explained that he didn't know what was in the oil barrels, and a lot more that was entirely unbelievable, the doctor left him with the hypodermic needle, figuratively speaking, sticking in him.

In the circumstances, the breakfast-table gathering of the depleted yacht party was anything but a cheerful meal. Margaret Ormsby had pulled herself together, and was doing her best, but the doctor's daughter was tender-eyed, and even placid Mrs. Ormsby was so distraught and preoccupied that she sugared her coffee twice and would have done it a third time if Margie had not quietly removed the sugar basin.

As an offset to the disasters of the morning, however, the report from the sick man was encouraging. He was sitting up to eat his breakfast, and was talking about getting out on deck a little later in the day. Also, he wanted to know why the *Lucita* was sailing south instead of north.

At this, Doctor Trimmell spoke of the necessity of keeping the invalid in ignorance as long as possible, though they were all agreed that the postponement couldn't be for very long.

"I'm hoping he'll sleep a good deal for these first few days," the doctor ventured. "The way he slept through all that turmoil this morning is encouraging."

It is a characteristic of disasters that life, or what there is left of it, has to go on in some fashion after them, making new ruts for itself if it can not find the old. By the middle of the forenoon, routine, of a sort, had laid hold upon the "survivors" of the yacht party. The doctor's daughter, imagining nothing less than a German prison camp for Tommy Ormsby, hid herself in her stateroom and refused to be comforted; Mrs. Ormsby stayed with her invalid and read him to sleep; and the doctor and Margie Ormsby kept the deck. It was an hour before noon that a small diversion broke in. The course of the raider, and, by consequence, that of the tagging yacht, had been laid to the southeast upon leaving the scene of the morning's one-sided battle. But now it was changing to the southward. The young woman who was doing her best to show the old doctor what stuff she was made of was quick to guess the reason.

"They have seen another ship!" she exclaimed.

There was a glass in its case on the after-deck rail, and the doctor swept the horizon with it.

"You are right," he said. "There is a faint smoke off there," pointing ahead and to the starboard.

"I pray God it may be a warship!" she murmured, half to herself; but the doctor took her up quickly.

"We mustn't forget that your brother and young Howell are aboard this tramp that isn't a tramp."

"I'm not forgetting it," was the low-toned reply. "They must just take their chances; and so must we, since we are obliged to keep within hail of the German. But all the same, I hope it may be a warship."

In the course of a little time the smoke which had been picked up with the help of the glass defined itself plainly, and shortly afterward the ship which was making it could be seen with the binoculars. It appeared to be another commerce carrier, bound south, but was a much speedier craft

than the British vessel which had been intercepted at sunrise. From the volumes of smoke pouring from its two funnels it was evident that the stranger had already taken the alarm. She was forcing her fires, and her course had been changed to give the yacht and its high-riding consort a wider berth to the eastward.

It was then that the tramp cruiser began to show that it was only in her freeboard that she resembled a loafer of the seas. From under her stern a quickened double commotion betrayed the fact that she was fitted with twin screws and engined for something better than a cargo carrier's slow pace.

For half an hour or longer the raider, with the *Lucita* foaming along on her quarter, held the new course to the southwestward. Then it became apparent to the two watchers on the yacht's after deck that the strange ship was steadily drawing ahead and widening the gap. Long before the German's guns came within range the peril for the quarry was over; and the reason became plain when another and more powerful glass brought from the cabin by Margie revealed the fleeing vessel as a swift passenger liner, bound, most probably, for New Orleans or Galveston.

"That was one time when the dog couldn't outrun the rabbit," said the doctor, when the cruiser suddenly gave up the chase and again resumed her course to the southeast. But his companion was a woman.

"Mercy!" she gasped, struggling in the throes of the sudden reaction. "To think that we've got to live in an atmosphere like this for Heaven only knows how long!" And with that she excused herself abruptly and fled to her stateroom.

For what remained of this day, throughout the night that succeeded, and for the better part of another day, the course of the raider-cruiser and its trailer yacht was roughly southeast, and during all that time no ships were sighted, nor was there any landfall.

In this interval the prison routine—it could be called nothing less—had firmly gripped each member of the *Lucita's* cabin complement. Of course, the invalid had been told what there was to tell; it could not be kept from him when he began to question Tommy's absence, and to question, still more curiously, the persistent southward course of the yacht. He took it very

well, all things considered. Instead of making him worse, it seemed to have the opposite effect; and on the second day he was able to sit in one of the wicker lounges under the after-deck awning and to see for himself the wallowing black pace setter which was leading them no one knew whither.

At dusk on this second day a yellow flash appeared on the starboard horizon, and Sarskjjoild, called aft and interrogated, pronounced it the light on the eastern tip of Cuba marking the entrance to the Windward Passage. This assertion was proved later on by an abrupt change of course to the southwest. But twenty-four hours later the southeasterly course was again resumed, and Sarskjjoild was once more summoned to the after deck. Up to this time there had been no communication of any sort between the yacht and the raider, and the prisoners in effect on board the *Lucita* had wearied themselves trying to guess the destination to which the German was leading them.

"What do you say, Sarskjjoild?" demanded the doctor, after the skipper had been sent for. "We all know you planned part of this piece of crookedness that has made us all prisoners in the hands of the Germans: now we want to know how much of it you are responsible for."

At this the man who had once been a master of ships and had lost his certificate made what purported to be a clean breast of it. In reality, however, he merely took a long chance. The two young men were prisoners aboard the raider, with an excellent prospect of disappearing finally in a German internment camp. This was his story: Upon his arrival in Jacksonville he had been approached by a man who produced a written order from T. Ormsby, junior, directing him to accept certain barrels for shipment, to arrange for an evening sailing hour instead of a morning, and to sail the yacht to a certain specified latitude and longitude to the southward. And to prove all this he exhibited a typewritten letter bearing a Middleboro date line and the signature, "T. Ormsby, junior."

Naturally, this confession had all the effects of a bomb tossed among the skipper's hearers. That Tommy—and Howell—should be so lost to every prompting of loyalty, or so blind to the probable consequences, as to authorize such a thing was blankly incredible; but there was the letter.

And even the good doctor was forced to admit that the actions of the young men during the prevoyage weeks of secrecy had been most inexplicable, if not pointedly suspicious.

"And you didn't know what was going to happen to us?" pursued the doctor, after the shocked pause.

"Ay know nothing, so hellup me Gott!"

"Well, then, perhaps you can tell us where we are now."

Sarskjold could, and did. He had taken the sun at noon, and had also kept a dead reckoning. According to his calculations, the *Lucita* must be off the eastern or south-eastern point of Jamaica, and the present course was heading her across the Caribbean.

"Where will that land us, and when?"

As to this, the sailing master could only offer a guess. If the course and speed should hold, the first landfall would be off the South American coast—Venezuela—and the time should be, with fair weather, within the next thirty-six hours.

The voluble skipper was dismissed, and with this assumption to build on there was an anxious discussion as to what the ultimate purpose of the German commander was concerning them. It was plain, from the experience of the past forty-eight hours, that the captain of the *Seeprinz* had some object in view other than the destruction of such merchantmen as he might overhaul. Oil tankers from Tampico would have afforded the easiest prey, but the chance at these had been lost by the rounding of Cuba to the eastward. To the surprise of the others it was the sick man who gave the hypothesis which had in it the strongest flavor of probability.

"The cruiser has a wireless, and it is more than likely the Germans are getting news from somewhere in these seas," he offered. "It looks a little as if she might be trying to run away."

"From what, would you say, Thomas?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, I don't know that, of course. But there ought to be British warships patrolling these waters around Jamaica; and we have some of our own at Guantanamo, if they haven't all been sent to the North Sea. It's a fair inference that the British, and our own people, know by this time of the raider's presence."

There were arguments for and against this

conclusion. If the raider were trying to escape some pursuit of which her wireless had warned her, she would scarcely have steered a course which took her within a hundred miles of the British naval station in Jamaica. On the other hand, the commerce-destroying mission had evidently been abandoned for some reason, since the raider was now leaving the well-defined ocean lanes and was steaming at full speed into an area in which there was little likelihood of falling in with merchant vessels.

It was while the after-deck conference was still going on that an air-jarring boom like the echo of distant thunder was wafted across the heaving waters. There was no mistaking the sound of cannon fire, and all eyes were turned toward the direction from which the sound seemed to come. Within the past quarter of an hour the quick-coming tropical night had flung its mantle of star-pricked gloom over ships and the wide waters. Out ahead the raider was lying to, and was flashing imperative signals for the *Lucita* to do the same. Through the night a slender searchlight cone, with its apex in a point of dazzling radiance on the southwestern horizon, was sweeping the sea; and in the middle distance between the raider and the yacht they saw the German's motor launch racing at top speed for the *Lucita*.

Things happened swiftly when the launch's motor was reversed under the yacht's quarter, and the German first officer, Von Kaufmann, and a full boatload of armed sailors swarmed aboard. Entirely ignoring the party on the after deck, Von Kaufmann bellowed an order to his men regarding the disposal of the launch as a tow, and ran up to the bridge to snatch the wheel out of Sarskjold's hands and to shout an order for full speed astern down the engine-room speaking tube.

The maneuver was made none too promptly. The searchlight eye, which was almost in line with the dark bulk of the *Seeprinz*, was approaching as if on the wings of the wind, and as the yacht backed out of the cone of light the hull of the raider stood out in sharpest detail. Half blinded by the glare of the silhouetting eye, the watchers on the *Lucita's* after deck saw indistinctly the outlines of the light bearer as it hove to opposite the *Seeprinz*. It was but a fleeting glimpse, caught as the yacht continued to back away out of the cone of brightness, but they were given time to rec-

ognize, in the stubby military masts and high freeboard forward, the much-pictured build of a British light cruiser.

CHAPTER IX.

VISIT AND SEARCH.

Upon their forcible transfer to the German tramp cruiser as securities for their own and the *Lucita's* good behavior, Tommy Ormsby and Howell found themselves ostensibly upon the footing of guests—with certain limitations; though they soon learned that their real status was that of prisoners guarded and suspiciously watched at every turn.

True, they were assigned a small cabin to themselves in the officers' quarters, they ate in the officers' mess, and had the freedom of the mess room, the smoking room, and the after deck. But with these concessions their liberties halted abruptly. With the single exception of the raider's commander, Holtzberg, the official rank and file ignored them completely and contemptuously; and the German *Verboten* confronted them constantly.

It was forbidden that they should go forward of a line drawn across the vessel amidships; they were warned to obey all orders implicitly and without question; they were told that they must hold no communication with any member of the raider's crew; and if they chanced to be on deck in the forenoon or afternoon hours when the prisoners in the forward hold were brought up for a breath of fresh air and exercise, they were to go below at once and shut themselves in their cabin.

Under such restrictions, Howell, whose outlook upon life—when he was not under the influence of his mother's too-anxious care—was hilariously cheerful, grew moody and thoughtful; and their effect upon Tommy Ormsby was frankly exasperating. Added to the minute but multiplied tyrannies—the deadly monotony, the plain fare and bad cooking of the mess, the silent contempt of the German officers, and the closely restricted liberty—there was the certainty that all of his carefully laid business plans were due to go by the board.

"Say, by Jove, Melly, I'm getting ripe for anything!" he growled when, in the afternoon of the third day, the appearance of a squad of the exercising prisoners had been the signal for their descent to the stuffy lit-

tle cabin. "This thing is simply unbearable! Think of it a minute. Leaving the farther future, German prison camps and all that, out of the question, what's to become of the business deal we've been nursing if this drop-out of ours goes on indefinitely?"

"There's no need to ask," said Melly Howell.

"You've said it! Craig will see that I don't turn up in Washington, as I promised to, and the fuse-plug contract will go to somebody else. Not having any contract to borrow on, Randall will go ashore at Grimsby's bank, and Grimsby will come down on him like a thousand of brick. That spells ruin for us and the loss of Randall's hard-earned savings."

"That is only one horn of the dilemma," Howell offered moodily.

"Yes; and the other is still sharper. Dad and the good old doctor and the women: the Lord only knows what they're all thinking of you and me while they're tagging along at the heels of this hooker and getting farther and farther away from home with every turn of the engines. Then there is what Marge said to you just before you were chucked over the *Lucita's* rail: she thinks—anybody would think—that the linen smuggling was a part of the business deal I had been refusing to talk about."

"Just the same, Margie is our best hope in that field," Howell put in. "She knew we had a traitor of some kind aboard the yacht."

"I know; but it looks crooked for us, at that. We ought to have put straight back to Jacksonville that night after we got our engines going. If I ever get my hands on that square-faced Swede!"

"You think it was Sarskjold?"

"It's bound to be. No member of the crew could have done it without the skipper's connivance. The course of the yacht was deliberately changed in the night. But all this chewing the rag doesn't get us anywhere." Tommy was sitting upon the edge of his bunk mopping the perspiration from his face. It was a torrid day, and the little cabin was like an oven. "I'm fed up on this blood-and-iron business," he went on after a moment. "I'm going to make a break of some sort. Where do you suppose we've drifted to by now?"

"I've been trying to figure it out. In the Caribbean somewhere, for a guess."

"Listen," said Tommy, lowering his voice. "I've got a bug gnawing in the place where my brain ought to be. Assuming that Marge and the doctor have got Sarskjold properly spotted and brought to heel, we two are the only string that keeps the *Lucita* tied to the tail of this hooker kite. If it wasn't for us, the yacht wouldn't have to take the invisible tow, would she?"

"Holtzberg would turn his guns on her and sink her if she tried to get away."

"Surest thing in the world, if he had a chance. But see here: there is no moon, and these tropical nights are as dark as a pocket. Suppose the *Lucita* should douse her lights suddenly, put her helm hard down and disappear? She has the speed to put her out of sight and out of gun range before this sham warship could beat to quarters. Don't you believe it?"

"It might be done," Howell qualified. "But you know very well it isn't going to be done; not while your people and the Trimells are aboard the yacht and you and I are here in the hands of the enemy."

Tommy Ormsby had his chin propped in his hands and he was staring steadily into the good gray eyes of his fellow captive.

"You used to have lashings of nerve, Melly; got any of it left?" he queried.

"Maybe—a little."

"All right; here's the dope. We pick the darkest part of the night for it, jump overboard and swim to the yacht. How about it?"

"There is nothing to prevent it—except a few little impossibilities. In the first place, we're not allowed to go on deck after dark."

Tommy Ormsby jerked a thumb in the direction of the cabin port light and Howell nodded.

"Yes; I suppose we might squeeze through, one at a time. But our chance of being picked up by the *Lucita* would be about one in a million, wouldn't it?"

"Wait," said Tommy. "Ever since we came aboard I've noticed that whoever happens to be steering the *Lucita* holds her in just about the same relative position on this hooker's starboard quarter. Get that?"

"Yes; I've noticed it, too."

"That's the answer. When we turn in tonight, we watch our chance, swipe a couple of those cork jackets in the mess room and hang them by their strings out of the port. Also, we can reconnoiter the position of the

yacht through the duck hole before we take the dive. First man out snatches one of the life belts; second man takes the other. Simple enough, isn't it?"

"But supposing the yacht misses us."

Again Tommy was eying his companion pointedly. "That is where the nerve comes in; or part of it. The rest will be needed when you remember that these southern waters are full of sharks, and that they have a way of following ships for the garbage that is thrown over." Then, after a pause: "Melly, how much of your college German do you remember?"

"Precious little of it. Why?"

"I'm in pretty much the same fix. But a smattering of mine has stuck to me; enough so that I can pick up a word here and there when these fellows talk it slowly enough."

"I can guess what's coming," said Howell. "Let's have it."

Ormsby tiptoed to the door, opened it silently, and made a quick survey of the outer surroundings.

"Nobody in sight," he reported. Then: "It's this way. Last night, a good while after we had gone to bed, somebody came to our door, opened it and looked in. I happened to be awake, and the light of the swing lamp in the mess room showed me the ugly face of Von Kaufmann. You were snoring away to beat the band, and the notion hit me to chime in and play second to your bass. The lieutenant looked and listened for a few seconds, and then backed out and shut the door. But it so chanced that he didn't latch it, and it swung open again—just a crack."

"The Irish stew—which happens to be German—thickens," Howell chuckled. "Go on."

"I got up, meaning to close and latch the door. But when I peeped out I saw Kaufmann and that black-bearded gunner officer sitting at the table and drinking beer. They were talking—in German, of course—and I caught the words, 'the little ship.' After that, I listened so hard it made my ears ache, for I knew they were talking about the *Lucita*."

"Could you get the gist of it?"

"Fairly well; better than I had any reason to expect. They were both grouching about Captain Holtzberg's soft-heartedness. According to Von Kaufmann, the yacht's company, men and women, ought to have been chucked into the forehold with the

prisoners they have been taking from sunken merchantmen, and the *Lucita* sent to the bottom. Then the gunner officer suggested that Holtzberg's plan was not so bad; that the people—our people, he meant—couldn't get off the island until some ship was permitted to go and take them off."

"The island?" queried Howell. "What island?"

"The name wasn't mentioned; but it needn't have any name. There are plenty of unnamed islands in the Caribbean, and any one of them will do. You can see how it checks out. This tag game we are playing can't go on forever; and no matter how soft-hearted Captain Holtzberg may be, he can't afford to turn the *Lucita* and her people loose to carry the news of him to America. My translation of what the gunner man meant is only a guess: Captain Holtzberg is intending to maroon the bunch of us somewhere, and then he can scuttle the yacht with a clear conscience."

"You mean leave us on some desert island? He'd hardly do that, with women and a sick man in the party."

"You can't tell what a German will do, Melly. He may be decent enough not to want to do it. But I heard enough to make it plain that his under officers will urge it—or something worse. They are sweating under their skins right now for the risk they are taking in American waters, after we have declared war. You can see that with half an eye."

For a little time Howell gazed thoughtfully out of the port light. Then he said with quiet decision: "I'm with you for the jump overboard, Tom. When shall it be?"

"How about to-night? The weather looks as if it might stay good, and the sea is smooth. As you say, the yacht may miss us, but that is a chance we've got to face. You're game for it, I know; and I guess maybe I will be, when the time comes."

In the evening of this third day, after the early mess-room supper, the two young men went on deck, ostensibly to smoke, but really to weigh and measure their chances for the adventure of the night.

Surveyed at large, with the difficulties and distances in plain view, the plan seemed fairly feasible. As heretofore, the *Lucita* hung upon the raider's starboard quarter as if she were towing at the end of a hawser. A few strong swimming strokes out from the side of the *Seeprins* would carry the adven-

turers squarely into the track of the yacht. For the remainder, the *Lucita's* bridge was comparatively low, and the man at the wheel—Sarskjold or another—could scarcely fail of seeing them, or of hearing them if they should call to him.

"Get the idea?" said Tommy, timing the query to fit the moment when the officer of the deck had moved away to the opposite rail.

"Perfectly," said Melly Howell. "Shall it be to-night?"

"The quicker the sooner." Then: "I'd give a year off the end of my life if I could think up some way of tipping the doctor off so he'd be on the lookout for us."

That was an enterprise clearly beyond any means at their command, but they continued to speculate in low tones upon the possibility. Not for long, however. Sunset had come, and the tropical night was advancing over the sea from east to west like an enveloping curtain of opacity. Since they were not permitted to stay on deck after dark, they prepared to go below.

As they were moving toward the companion stair, Tommy Ormsby turned to fling his cigarette stub over the side. In the act, there came a hail from the foretop lookout, a megaphoned bellow from the bridge, and instantly the decks became a scene of tumultuous activity, with the watch below pouring up out of its quarters, officers shouting orders, and men running hither and yon as if their lives depended upon the promptest obedience.

"For Heaven's sake!" gasped Tommy. "What's struck us!"

The exclamation faintly mirrored the furious turmoil of industry that had developed so quickly. The false bulwarks forward had come tumbling inboard, and hustling crews, a gang to each piece, were detaching and stowing them out of sight between decks. A signal was flashing for the yacht to stand by, and a boat's crew was hoisting the motor launch over the side.

Officers, stripping their uniforms as they ran, were ducking to cover down the companionway; and while Howell and Ormsby were still trying to make out what had happened, a section of the fore deck upon which the two heavy guns were mounted began to sink out of sight to a clanking of chains and a rattling of winch gears, and at the same time a false deck was sliding forward to cover and hide the gap.

Every move in the swift transformation was timed to a second. When an electric eye in the southwest flashed up and began to grope for the raider with its penciled beam, and the rumbling thunder of a long-range gun announced the searchlight's success, the masking was complete. Forward and aft the tramp had taken on the appearance of a thousand other vessels of her type.

From her sides, outboard, long strips of painted canvas had been removed, revealing the name, "Solberg, Christiana," in huge white letters on the side plating. At the mizzen peak drooped the flag of Norway; and from the decks had vanished, as if by magic, the swarming warship crew, its place being taken by a tramp's scanty handful of hard-bitten sailormen in slop-shop out-fittings; these lounging idly as the watch on deck with nothing to do.

In the hurried scene changing the two prisoner guests had apparently been overlooked. But now their turn had come. The German commander, out of his spick-and-span uniform and clad now in the sea togs of a freighter's master, brusquely ordered them below, following, himself, a pace behind, to turn the key of their cabin upon them. Tommy Ormsby swore sourly in the thick darkness of the confined little cubby-hole.

"Some humane stunt!" he growled in morose sarcasm. "Suppose that ship with the gun and the searchlight should take a notion to sink this hooker. Fat chance we'd have, locked up in this dog kennel of a place!"

Howell made no reply. He was fumbling in the dark and trying to open the port light for better air—trying and finding the job impossible. Since they had last occupied the cubby-hole cabin an iron bar had been staped across the port.

"See here, Tom!" he ejaculated; and when Tommy had felt, because he couldn't see: "I guess we don't swim off to the *Lucita* to-night—or any other night. Somebody was listening when we talked it over this afternoon. They're spying on us!"

It was a body blow, but outside of their prison cell things were happening of a nature to make them forget for the moment the checkmating of their small plot of escape. Through the glass of the port light they saw a big gray ship heaving to at a cable's length from the raider, and an instant later

they were blinded by the glare of the great light suddenly turned their way.

Followed quickly the descent of a boat from the gray ship's davits, and by shading their eyes they could make out the boat coming to board. It soon passed beyond their restricted line of vision, but presently the noises overhead announced its arrival.

"You know more about the other navies than I do," said Tommy Ormsby, straining his eyes to get a better look at the stranger. "How do you make her out?"

"British scout cruiser," Howell decided. "We have no ships that look anything like that. What do you say? Will Holtzberg take the trick in the little game in which he has so carefully stacked the cards? And what do you suppose has become of the *Lucita*?"

"The Germans have taken care of the yacht; that is why the motor launch went over the side in such a hurry a few minutes ago. As for the brace game Holtzberg is putting up—if these people who are boarding us have the wits of a bunch of rabbits, it can't be put across. Think a minute; this hooker has no cargo to show up, and it's neck-full of men—what with the big crew and the prisoners that have been taken."

A trampling of heavily shod feet in the mess room adjoining announced that the boarding party, or some part of it, had come below. This was natural, since the forged ship's papers with which the German commander had doubtless provided himself would have to be examined by the light of the cabin lamp. Howell's grip tightened upon his companion's arm.

"This is our chance!" he whispered. "We can't very well break the door, because it opens inward, but we can raise a racket that will make those people curious to know who or what is locked up in here. Stand aside and let me—"

The sentence went unfinished because, at that precise moment, two burly Germans rolled out of their concealment in the bunks on either side of the small room, and a huge, ill-smelling hand was clapped over the speaker's mouth. Still within speaking distance of his football training, Melly Howell put up a good fight. But he had been taken unawares, and the muzzling hand was stifling him. Struggling for a hold to break the strangling clutch before his breath should be gone, he did his best to make it a

knock-out for his unseen but muscular assailant.

Unhappily, the knock-out came the other way. In the silent, close-quarters battle, in which two other frenzied wrestlers were continually getting in the way, the owner of the strangling hand secured a leg lock that could not be broken, and Howell felt himself going over backward. And from that to a crash which brought a blinding scintillation of stars and oblivion was but a single clock tick.

CHAPTER X.

IN THE LAGOON.

Melly Howell, with his first taste of war salty in his mouth from a cut lip, came back to consciousness with the resumed grind and go of the raider's engines rumbling in his ears. The stuffy little kennel cabin was as dark as Egypt. Howell sat up, groping in the blackness, and his hand touched a human figure lying prone in one of the bunks. "Tom!" he cried; and got upon his knees to fall at work upon the many knottings with which his fellow loser in the wrestling match was bound.

The handkerchief gag came last, merely because Howell couldn't see it, and didn't know it was there until he felt for it. With its removal came an outpouring of spirit on the part of the one who had been bottled up, as one might say, with the cork tied in; fervent maledictions consigning the *Seeprinz* and its entire company—not to a watery grave, but to a place where water is said to be the scarcest of the commodities.

Howell's throat still ached from the strangling, and his laugh was only a hoarse cackle.

"Certainly, if you wish it," he chuckled, referring to the warm desires voiced in the cursings. "Send them anywhere you please. We've been properly 'strafed,' I take it. Have they crippled you in any way?"

Tommy Ormsby sat up and felt of himself. "Bruises to beat the band, but nothing serious, I guess. They're nothing to the way my feelings are hurt. How about yourself?"

"I have a hump on the back of my head where the deck rose up and hit me," Howell answered, passing a hand tenderly over the spot. "I've been batty ever since, until a few minutes ago. What happened, after I blew up?"

"Nothing to speak of. The two garroters got the smother on me in about half a min-

ute after you were eliminated; gagged me and tied me up. Then they sat down in the other bunk and waited. After a bit, the confab in the mess room was broken off and there were more trappings overhead. Pretty soon I heard the Britishers' boat going back, and the two stranglers got up and let themselves out, locking the door behind them. Next, the hooker's engines were started. For once in a way a German captain had hornswoggled the British navy. It must have been that way or we couldn't have got off."

For a time Howell was silent. Then he said: "I guess this little scrimmage of ours with the two sailors settles it, Tom. Holtzberg knows now what we were intending to do, and we're no longer even make-believe guests on this pirate ship. We'll be in luck if they don't make us walk the plank in good old buccaneer fashion."

"Let them!" snapped Tommy Ormsby belligerently. Then: "Take a squint out of the window and see if you can find the *Lucita*."

Howell went to the port light which couldn't be opened, and by gluing an eye to the glass at the acutest possible angle made out the dim white shape of the yacht following the raider in her customary position.

"She's still with us," he reported.

They sat and talked for a while, discussing the new situation and trying to plan an alternative to the frustrated escape. Finally, when it became evident that they were to be left to themselves for the remainder of the night, at least, they turned in to sleep, agreeing to let the morrow take care of itself.

In the morning the new status was sufficiently defined when a sheep-faced steward unlocked the door, thrust a breakfast tray in, and locked them up again. As when they had fallen asleep the night before, the raider was still pounding along, and the course, which could be roughly determined by the position of the sun, was once more south and by east.

"Prisoners all," Howell grinned, beginning an attack on the breakfast in which Tommy Ormsby presently joined. "I'm not so tremendously pro-German as I might be, this morning, Thomas, my son; my head is too sore."

But now Tommy Ormsby's rage was somewhat sleep-tempered, and he was able to take a fighting man's view of the overnight tussle and its consequences.

"We made a straight bid for it, Melly," he pointed out. "We had planned to break our sham parole and take French leave; and more than that, we were just getting ready to put this outfit in bad with the British search party. Holtzberg is still within his rights as a belligerent."

"I suppose he is," Howell acquiesced. "Just the same, I'm rather glad the 'overt act' has been committed. From this time on, Tommy, I'm a fighting American, with no 'ifs' or 'ands' or 'buts' about it."

The day thus ushered in by the prison-cell breakfast promised to be a bad one for the two who had forfeited their niggard measure of liberty—and it kept the promise. Once, just before noon, they were taken out under guard and given a few minutes for a turn on deck, but in this brief release they saw neither the captain nor his English-speaking second officer; saw nothing but sea and sky, the rehabilitated raider with her guns once more in position, and the *Lucita*, still plowing along in her appointed place.

Locked in again, with another tray of food which had been provided in their short absence, they faced an afternoon of slowly dragging hours, during a part of which they slept from sheer ennui. But at a few minutes past four o'clock the ennui was broken with a shock that first tingled and thrilled, and later became a nightmare of horror.

Howard had risen from his bunk at the sudden stoppage of the raider's engines to go to the port light, and his startled exclamation brought Tommy Ormsby quickly to his side. In the offing, but well within their limited field of vision, they saw a two-funneled steamship, her build and superstructure marking her as one of the converted passenger liners.

A second glance showed them that the ship was lying to, and that her decks were a scene of wild and terrified confusion. Quite plainly they could see the people on board making frantic efforts to lower the lifeboats; also, it was apparent that the vessel was listing gradually to port, careening slowly until the decks rose from the level and became inclined planes down which struggling figures were sliding helplessly.

"My God!" Tommy Ormsby choked, "they're sinking—they've been torpedoed!"

As he spoke, one of the boats, crowded to the gunwales, was swung out over the side. In its lowering the stern davit fall fouled,

and an instant later it was hanging, bow downward, with its human freight spilling into the sea.

Another boat followed, and then a third, with better luck; but now the fatal list to port had increased until it was impossible to lower the starboard boats; impossible, too, to get either of the remaining port boats over the side. To the horrified onlookers behind the barred port light it was plain that the sinking ship would carry the greater part of her people down with her; already they could see men flinging themselves over the side or dropping from ropes into the waves.

"Why, in God's name, doesn't Holtzberg send them help!" groaned Tommy Ormsby; and the answer came as if the agonized exclamation had evoked it. Out of the quiet sea halfway between the raider and the sinking liner a gray shape emerged, the water cascading from its boxlike superstructure and low whaleback deck. Coincident with the appearance of the submarine the pitiful tragedy climaxed. There was an explosion of some sort in the bowels of the sinking ship, an upheaval of the decks, a struggle, as if she were striving like some sentient thing to right herself, and then a sullen plunge, stern foremost, to the depths.

It was then that the two prisoners, staring through the barred cell window with eyes that had forgotten how to wink, saw the German doctrine of frightfulness exemplified in its most inhuman form. While the two overcrowded lifeboats, which were all that remained, were still tossing on the waves of the vortex left by the sinking ship, the hatches of the submarine flew open, the guns and their gunners rose out of them, and shell after shell was sent crashing, at the deadly short range, into the helpless boats.

When it was over, with only the calm tropic sea strewn with wreckage and a few bobbing heads to mark the horror, the two wretched witnesses in the kennel cabin had thrown themselves upon the bunks, sick, shaken, and speechless.

Some little time had elapsed, and the raider-cruiser was once more grinding away on her course to the southeast, before either of them could summon the courage to speak of what they had seen. It was Tommy Ormsby who finally broke the silence.

"I'm sick as a horse, yet, Melly," he said weakly. "Was there ever such a fiendish

thing as that pulled off before in all the history of the human race?"

"In this war, yes; and not once, but many times. But until you've looked on and seen it with your own eyes——"

The answer from the opposite bunk was a groan.

"Oh, my God, Melly, I hope the good old doctor drove the women below in the *Lucita* and kept them there! If my mother saw that——" The sentence was broken by another groan, but when he began again there was a new note in his voice. "It isn't just a breakaway for us, now, Melly, even if we get the chance. We were on our way to Norfolk to enlist: it strikes me that we're already in it—the only able-bodied Americans on the job. I don't want to quit now until I've had a chance to hit one good lick for our side."

"Nor I," said Melly briefly. "After what we've seen this day—but let's not talk any more about it. It will be unforgettable enough, God knows."

It was drawing on toward evening, and in due time their supper came, and still they were given no hint of what was in store for them. But deep in the night, after they had fallen into a troubled sleep, they were awakened by another halting of the raider's engines and a prolonged roar which betokened the dropping of an anchor. Howell was the first to spring to his feet, and he made his way quickly to the port.

"What is it now?" whispered Tommy Ormsby.

"I don't know. We are anchored somewhere, pretty close to land; I can see the break of a reef with the surf on it, but the sea on this side of it is as still as a lake."

"An island?" queried Tommy, joining his fellow captive.

"Probably. And what is this—lying right here under our bilge?"

In the uncertain starlight it looked like the back of an enormous whale. Then, as their eyes became accustomed to the infiltrated darkness, the thing took a shape and a name familiar enough now to all the seafaring world.

"Heaven!" gritted Tommy, "it's the beast of a submarine!"

There was no doubt about it. The top works and conning tower lay just ahead of the port-light point of espial, the twin periscopes figuring as black masts rising to a height beyond their eye reach. There were

men on the small platform which served for a bridge, and one of them, by his gestures, was giving orders to a tramping gang on the deck of the raider over their heads.

Presently a black flexible thing like a small hawser came over the raider's side, was caught by a couple of men manning an open hatch in the submarine, and passed below.

"Now we've got the answer to all the guesses!" said Howell, sinking back upon one of the bunks. "Besides being a commerce destroyer, this pirate is a mother ship for submarines! That is why we haven't been chasing prizes these past few days. This brute outside has been waiting around for a fresh supply of fuel oil—and killing whatever happened along in the meantime to keep her cursed hand in!"

"You've said it!" Tommy Ormsby exploded. "And the *Lucita*—what do you suppose they've done with her?"

Melly Howell rose, groped for his coat and put it on.

"That is something I'm going to find out, right now. Will you back me?"

"Surest thing on earth. But you've forgotten that we are locked in, with the door probably guarded, besides."

"I have forgotten nothing," Howell whipped out his pocketknife and inserted the bigger of the blades noiselessly in the crack between the door and the jamb just above the lock. Next, with the stickpin from his tie he began to probe gently upward through the keyhole into the mechanism of the lock. There was a faint click as the probe found the catch which held the bolt in its shot position. Then the knife blade, nicked upon the edge of the bolt, was made to rock back and forth in the crack, the merest fraction of an inch at a time; became a tiny pinchbar to pry the bolt out of its socket. In a few seconds a louder click announced the success of the lock picking, and Howell gave the word.

"Ready, now!" he whispered. "The chances are that there won't be more than one man on guard; the rest of them will be on deck. But we've got to make sure of that one man!"

"Go to it!" said Tommy, between set teeth; and Howell turned the latch softly and jerked the door inward.

Tommy Ormsby's quick leap was not needed. There was nobody in the mess-room cabin; no one in sight anywhere. The

swinging oil lamp over the table was turned low, and on the table were empty bottles and beer steins. On either hand were other doors leading to the various officers' quarters, one of them standing open. Howell darted silently across and into the open door, emerging presently with a pair of automatics, one of which he passed to Tommy.

"It's Von Kaufmann's cabin," he said. "I saw the pistols hanging in their holsters one day as he came out. We may not need to kill anybody; and then again, we may."

Tiptoeing to the companionway they began to climb the steps with due caution, Howell in the lead. Cautiously they inched their way up to the deck level, wondering that, with the ship at anchor in a sheltered harbor, there should be no lights showing. While they were still on the steps, the gear grind of a power pump began somewhere in the depths of the vessel to tell them that the fuel was going over the side into the submersible's tanks.

Once fairly on deck in the faint starlight, they saw that they still stood a chance of escaping immediate discovery. Only a few of the raider's crew were in sight, and these were lined up along the starboard rail, which was the side upon which the submarine lay. As they emerged from the companion head, Howell dragged Tommy into the shadow of the deck house upon the port side.

From this temporary refuge they were able to place themselves in reference to their surroundings, so far as the dim light would permit. The raider—and the submersible—were lying in a broad lagoon, with a forest-covered mainland at the right reaching out in curving points toward an inclosing reef showing a white line of surf as the ground swell broke lazily over it. There was a tiny fire on shore, with dark figures standing or lying about it; but there was no sign of the *Lucita*.

Tommy Ormsby stared long and earnestly at the dimly defined group on shore.

"It's one of two things, Melly," he breathed. "Either the yacht has got away in the night—or they've sunk her."

Howell did not answer at once. He was shading his eyes from the firelight and trying to pierce the gloom in which the shore group was buried. When he spoke, in a whisper matching Tommy's, it was to say: "Your pipe dream has come true. Holtzberg has marooned our people—and a lot of others. I can make out at least two

women—just beyond the fire. Look closely and you'll see them yourself."

Tommy Ormsby looked and gulped down a cry of rage; swallowed it whole.

"It's up to us, Melly!" he gritted softly. "Do we let them chuck our people ashore like a bunch of convicts without our hitting back at them?"

"Not on your life!" was the prompt answer to the challenge. Then: "I have a plan—listen!" and as they crouched lower to make themselves small in the shadow of the deck structure, the plan was unfolded in hurried whispers.

CHAPTER XI.

SABOTAGE.

Being a lawyer's son, with an education designed to enable him to follow in his father's footsteps, Melly Howell knew little about the vast and varied war science of destruction. But since they were only two men against a hundred and more, destruction was the only weapon they could hope to employ.

The murderous submarine lying under the raider's bilge seemed to offer the weakest place in the enemy's line. Lacking fuel oil, it was safely out of commission; if some way could be devised in which to keep it out! Howell's plan, the details of which he confided to Tommy, was beautifully primitive; also, it was lacking the final factor of conclusiveness. But Tommy—himself the son of a machine shop, as one might say—could suggest nothing better; so they set about it.

Stealing forward on the deserted port side of the raider mother ship, and still wondering why the Germans were doing their tank-filling job in utter darkness, they passed under the bridge and so came to the open hatch through which the oil hose led up to the hold. This hatch had been the prison lid shutting in the crews of the various sunken prizes; and now they thought they knew how to account for the half-deserted condition of the *Seeprins*. The prisoners had doubtless been ferried ashore, with a major portion of the raider's crew for a guard—this to leave a clear field for the transfer of supplies to the submersible.

Howell led the way at the open hatch, hanging by his hands on the coaming and dropping into the unlighted depths below. Tommy Ormsby followed, dropping fairly

into Howell's arms. The dark hold reeked with the prison smell, the sickening odor of human overcrowding. There seemed to be no provision made for ventilation, and the place was like the Black Hole of Calcutta.

With the trailing oil hose for their guide they pushed on. The hose ran aft, leading, amidships, to a boxlike iron tunnel passing either under or through the coal bunkers. At the farther end of the tunnel a dim light showed, and again Howell took the lead, crawling on hands and knees along the passageway with Tommy at his heels.

At the end of the tunnel they found themselves in a small, iron-walled pump room lighted by a single incandescent bulb suspended from the ceiling. That they were in the immediate vicinity of the ship's boilers and engine room was made plain by the stifling heat. In the middle of the iron chamber stood the oil-passing unit; a centrifugal pump driven, through gearing, by an auxiliary steam engine. Directly overhead, and reached by an iron ladder bracketed to the wall, was an open grating. Through this they could hear voices, and a faint odor of pipe tobacco drifted down upon them.

In planning the raid they had not hoped to find the pump room untenanted; but so it was. Having set the machinery going, the pump man had doubtless climbed to the engine room above to escape the heat. With the field thus clear the end they had in view asked for no strategy. A rack of tools on the bulkhead offered the means: Tommy Ormsby caught up a hammer, and one swinging blow smashed the thin cast-iron shell of the oil pump. And for his part, Howell thrust a steel wrench into the unprotected cogwheels. With a din like that of a boiler shop the driving machinery wrecked itself. From the engine room above came a hoarse, "*Mein Gott im Himmel!*" and a pair of legs in overalls came through the open grating with the feet feeling madly for the rungs of the ladder. Howell flung another wrench at the light bulb, making a hit that left the place in darkness, and then they fled, scrambling forward through the iron tunnel and running to the hatch in the fore hold. Here Howell made a human ladder of himself to enable Tommy to reach the coaming, and Tommy, in turn, left a leg down for his accomplice to climb by.

"What next?" gasped Ormsby when,

grimy and breathless, they had scuttled to cover in the shadow of the bridge. Swiftly as they had retreated the alarm had already spread to the raider's deck. There was a trampling of many feet to tell them that the loungers at the starboard rail were running forward, and an eager arm hooked over the coaming of the fore hatch proved that they had been promptly pursued from below.

"Back! The way we came!" Howell panted; and they raced aft on the port side of the ship, hurling themselves down the cabin companion and into their prison kennel, Howell shutting the door and quickly relocking it with the knife blade and stick-pin combination. Then: "Off with your clothes and into your bunk in a hurry!" and in the pitch darkness they hid the stolen pistols under their mattresses, flung their outer garments right and left, and tumbled into the sleeping shelves.

This naive attempt at camouflage promised little more than a short reprieve, as the event quickly proved. Almost at once the temporarily baffled pursuit came crowding into the mess-room cabin and somebody tried the door of their refuge. Then a key was thrust into the lock, the bolt was shot, and the glare of an electric flash light illuminated the sleeping cubicle. Tommy Ormsby struggled up on an elbow and gave a very fair imitation of a man suddenly awakened out of a sound sleep.

"Cut it out! What are you trying to do?" he growled, crooking an arm across his face to shut out the glare.

There was a momentary consultation in German; then a guttural voice said: "You vill out of dose bets get und come vit us, *geschwind*—quick!"

Tommy Ormsby made a proper show of awakening Howell, and they got up and dressed under a volley of German commands presumably urging haste. In the mess-room cabin the swinging lamp was still burning. The companion steps were well guarded by soldier-sailors whose bayoneted guns made any attempt at escape a quick bid for suicide. The two prisoners were roughly shoved and hustled and made to stand with their backs to the bulkhead behind the mess table. They saw that the men who were mishandling them were chiefly strangers; sullen-faced fellows in the oil-stained leather of the undersea service. It was evident that the submarine's officers

and crew had taken the place temporarily, at least, of Captain Holtzberg and his men.

"We needn't look for any mercy from this outfit," said Tommy Ormsby, out of the corner of his mouth. Then: "Buck up—here comes the head murderer!"

Instead of one there were two coming down the companion steps, the commander of the submersible and his second. One glance at the bloated brutal face of the superior officer was enough to tell the saboteurs that they were no longer dealing with a good-natured reservist of the Holtzberg type.

The inquisition was short and sharp, giving the culprits little chance to equivocate. But for that matter their clothes, begrimed by the crawl through the rusty iron tunnel in the bowels of the ship, betrayed and condemned them.

"You are Americans?" snapped the inquisitor, showing his teeth like a dog preparing to bite.

Howell answered for both. "We are," he said.

"*Nein!*" was the snarling denial; "you are *schweinkunde*—pig-dogs! Has it never to you been told what Germany does with civilians who make of themselves *franc-tireurs*? Is it so that you have not of Belgium heard?"

Again Howell spoke for both.

"We saw what you did to that ship and its people this afternoon, and that was enough. We smashed the pump to keep you from getting oil, and we are only sorry that we couldn't think of some way of sinking your infernal murder machine and you with it."

"So? Good. For that you shall be shot."

At this the second officer, a young Prussian with the cold eyes and haggard, dissipated face of his cult, whipped out his automatic. But the other caught his wrist and turned the weapon aside. There was a little talk between the two, and Tommy Ormsby, listening avidly, heard Captain Holtzberg named, together with some reference to "his ship" and "in the morning."

Following this came a curt order to the sailor guards, and without a word of explanation vouchsafed, the two captives were driven on deck at the point of the bayonet and over the side into a dinghy which had evidently been used in some of the previous shore-goings.

Into the boat with them tumbled five of

their captors, three with guns, and the other two to row. A quick pull across the mirror-like surface of the lagoon and the boat was beached upon the white sands at some considerable distance from the camp fire which was still glimmering among the trees farther around the curved shore line.

At the landing there were more indignities for the captives. The five men set upon them, flung them down, and bound them hand and foot. That done, two of the five rowed the boat back to the anchored raider, the gun-armed three remaining as guards. Immediately the three dragged the helpless ones up to the forest edge, and after systematically robbing them of everything they had, sat apart to quarrel over a division of the spoils.

"Perhaps you'll tell me what you find in this dirty bag of tricks to laugh at!" rasped Howell, when Tommy Ormsby rolled over on his back and began to chuckle softly.

"An attack of afterwit," said Tommy promptly. "I was just thinking what a pair of suckling infants we were to be satisfied with merely croaking an oil pump, when we might have—but it's no use to cry over spilled milk. You see, we've only delayed the fueling game for a few minutes, or hours, and for that we shall be shot in the morning."

"Think they really mean to stand us up before a squad?"

"Not a doubt of it. I couldn't catch all that was said; but it seems that Captain Holtzberg is sick and has been taken ashore. He is to be asked to waive his claims upon us in the morning, and then we can be 'strafed' decently and in order."

Howell grunted. "I shouldn't mind so much if we had done something worth being shot for. As you say, we've only delayed the game. Think they'll let us see our people before they call out the squad?"

"Not likely. That would be much too un-German."

Silence for a moment, and then: "How's the damaged heart behaving, Melly?"

Howell grunted again: "Wouldn't know I had one; guess I never had one—a damaged one, I mean."

At this conjuncture further talk was inhibited by the nearest of the three guards who reached over and prodded Howell in the ribs with his bayonet, growling out an order in German for which the sharp steel point offered a sufficient translation. Re-

duced to silence, the two lay side by side, each busy with his own thoughts. Off shore they could hear muffled hammerings to tell them that the submarine's mechanics were installing another pump connection, but aside from this the stillness was profound.

Half an hour or so beyond the bayonet prick, Howell saw that two of the guards were composing themselves for sleeping, sprawling upon the warm sands and each with his gun under his hand. The third man was still sitting up, smoking a long-stemmed pipe, but he had his back turned and appeared to be concerning himself very little about his responsibilities.

By slow inchings Howell turned upon his side and began to work upon the knot of his hand fetterings. At home, one of the young lawyer's small social accomplishments was the ability to entertain a roomful of people with sleight-of-hand tricks. And to help matters along, the knots had been tied by sailors, whose trade teaches them to tie knots in such a fashion as to leave them reasonably easy to untie.

In a short time the bound hands were free to begin a careful search in the series of looted pockets. One of Howell's little luxuries was a tiny gold-handled knife used as a cigar clipper. It was attached to his key ring, among his keys, and he was hoping against hope that the bunch had been overlooked or discarded in the systematic pocket picking. To his great joy he found that his half-hearted supposition was true. Howell drew his feet up by half inches and one thrust of the keen little blade freed them. Then he rolled over cautiously and put his lips to Tommy Ormsby's nearest ear.

The head was wagged, and he went on: "Slip your hands out so I can reach them. I have a knife—now your feet."

It was done, successfully. By this time the two watchers who had shifted their duty to the shoulders of the third were snoring peacefully, and the third man was nodding. The captives were unbound, but what to do next? To spring up and overpower the nodding sentry would have been easy, but the struggle would arouse the other two and so turn the odds the other way. Howell pointed out the safer expedient.

"That fellow's nodding," he hissed in Tommy's ear. "Wait until he does it again, and then try a crawl, keeping under the

shadow of the trees. When you get a start, I'll watch my chance and follow."

Tommy Ormsby obeyed promptly. Turning upon his stomach he crawled away, the soft sand deadening the noise of his movements. Howell kept his eyes fixed upon the nodding figure at his right, staring with every muscle tuned and strained for the leap to follow the first sign of awakening.

Untrained as he was in the use of arms, Howell knew precisely what he should do if the German came awake. The man was sitting with his back rounded and his rifle lying loosely in the crook of his left arm. At the attacking leap the gun must be seized, jerked free, and, in the same set of motions, the butt brought down upon the nodding head.

Fortunately for the reluctance with which any soldier, amateur or other, must contemplate the details of his first killing, the sleepy German did not come awake. Howell waited until Tommy Ormsby's shuffling retreat was no longer audible. Then, at an unmistakable snore from the humped figure at his right, he turned and followed his file leader.

Five minutes later he overtook Ormsby a hundred yards up the beach. They listened. There was no alarm, and together they plunged boldly into the black shadows of the forest. For the moment, at least, they were free and foot-loose.

CHAPTER XII.

A COUNTER THRUST.

Most naturally, while they were endeavoring to put distance between themselves and the immediate danger of recapture, the fugitives wasted little time in talk. But a perspiring half hour farther along, when they came out upon the beach no more than a short quarter mile from the place where they had left it and realized that they had merely circled in the jungle darkness, they flung themselves down to breathe and to laugh grimly at the fate which was stubbornly refusing to let them get away from the dangerous vicinity.

In the circling they had borne to the right, and the emerging point gave them a better idea of the topographies. The curving beach formed a crescent, with the raider as the center from which the shore line might have been struck. Looking eastward, they could see the glimmer of the dying camp

fire. Out upon the black mirror surface of the lagoon, the *Seeprins* lay motionless at her anchorage. The raider was still without visible lights, and the muffled hammering continued with unabated vigor.

"It strikes me there is a good bit of mystery mixed up in this thing yet," said Tommy Ormsby, staring fixedly at the ship blotting out a section of the encircling reef. "I haven't been regarding Holtzberg as a sick man. How does it come that he broke down so suddenly and had to turn things over to the submarine butcher? And why are they balling things up out there in the dark when they might have the whole electric equipment of the raider for lights?"

"I give it up," said Howell. "What I'd like to know is where we are 'at' in the mix-up. If we are on an island—and I suppose the coral reef answers for that—it can't be a large one."

"Call it a little one," agreed Tommy sentimentally.

"Calling it a little one, with the two German crews to beat the bushes, we can't count upon living very many hours after daybreak."

"No, I guess not. I'm trying to get used to it, Melly. This life has suddenly grown too swift for me."

"I know," nodded Howell. "I'm still trying to convince myself that it isn't all a lobster dream."

"Oh, it's reality, all right—with a punch, at that. Not that I'm backing down; I'm ready to take another whirl, if there is one, and somebody will tell me what it's to be. Still, I confess shamelessly that I'd like to see mother and dad and Marge once more before I step off into the wherever it is. And that isn't saying a word about Allie Trim-mell, either, as you'll observe."

"I'm observing," Howell commented shortly.

"Yes; and putting Marge's name in the place of Allie's, for your part of it," Tommy grinned. "But let that go. The old life has gone glimmering. If so, what's left? Soldiering, Melly; nothing on top of earth but soldiering—while the firing squad holds off. And that brings me down to the rat that's gnawing me just now. I don't mind paying a good stiff price for goods delivered. But I do hate it mightily when I don't get my money's worth."

"Meaning that we didn't get our money's worth in smashing the pump?"

"Not by many golden shekels. They'll rig up another pump; and to-morrow morning, when they can see to comb us out of this island jungle, we'll pay the price of a real, sure-enough soldier's job."

"I'm with you," said Howell simply. "Do we go back down the beach and kill those three sleepy-headed sailors for a beginning?"

"I'd say 'yes' in a holy minute if there were any profitable afterclap to the massacre. Let me think a minute." With his elbows on his knees he propped his head in his hands, looking up presently to say: "Listen! Isn't that a pump going again?"

It was, unmistakably; not a centrifugal, this time, but a pump of the plunger type with a reciprocating clang that was clearly audible.

"There you are," he went on dejectedly. "A little delay is all we bought."

Howell rose to his full height, stretching his arms over his head.

"It runs in my mind that I'm going around yonder to murder those snoozing sailors," he announced half jocularly. "It's what a guard deserves for sleeping at his post, anyhow."

"Do you mean it?" demanded Tommy Ormsby, getting up and shaking the sand from his clothes.

"Well, perhaps nothing quite so cold-blooded as that," laughed Howell. "Just the same, we ought to be getting action of some sort. We seem to have a little time, just now, that belongs exclusively to us, and——"

The interruption was the appearance in the northern sky of a curious apparition. Though it lasted but a fraction of a second, Howell saw it quite distinctly; a broad pencil of light shooting up from the distant horizon, quivering for an instant, and then disappearing as mysteriously as it had come.

"Say, Tom; did you see that?" he queried excitedly.

Tommy Ormsby was still dusting his clothes. "No; I didn't see anything. What was it?"

"I can't imagine. It was exactly like the aurora, as I have seen it in northern Michigan. But they don't have northern lights this far south—or do they?"

"Northern lights? What you saw must have been a ship's searchlight!"

"By George!" said Howell, disgusted at his own lack of imagination; "of course, that

is what it was! Look right over this little break in the surf to the left"—pointing the direction. "Maybe it will show again."

It did show again, and they both saw it this time. Howell's imagination quickly re-deemed itself.

"Thomas, my son, a searchlight in war time means a warship. No merchantman would go about, showing a light!"

"Carry it farther," snapped Tommy. "It's a warship searching for something. Now we know why those Boches out yonder are working in the dark. Both the *Seeprins* and the submarine have wireless, and they've been tipped off from somewhere!"

As he spoke it became evident that others had seen the false aurora as well as themselves, since the tiny night fire among the trees at the other extremity of the beach blinked out like a candle in a gust of wind. Tommy Ormsby stiffened himself.

"That puts it more than ever up to us, Melly," he said quietly. "That ship out yonder is looking for the raider, or the underwater devil, or the island, or all three. We must make some sort of a flare that they can't help seeing."

"Nothing easier," said Melly Howell. "This jungle ought to have deadwood enough in it to make a bonfire. We'll go back a ways, and—"

"Hold on a minute," Tommy broke in, searching his empty pockets. But the search was in vain. The pocket-picking guards had not missed the silver keepsake match box; either his or Howell's.

"No matches, and consequently no signal fire," he grated. "And that isn't all; the tobacco's gone, too. Melly, without matches and tobacco we'll have to face that firing squad in the morning before we've had a smoke. That is clearly impossible. Let's go back to those three sleeping beauties and rescue the matches and the makin's."

"That is just what I was going to suggest when you began about the searchlight," said Howell. "Let's go."

Not to miss the advantage of a surprise, they plunged into the jungle, meaning to come out in the rear of the enemy. But as soon as they left the open beach they again lost their sense of direction. After a considerable time spent in struggling through the thick tangle they emerged—not upon the scene of the battle-to-be, but upon the edge of a small open glade, with the lagoon lying beyond it, a column of steam rising

lazily from a quenched fire in its center, and its sward liberally bestrewn with dark objects which they quickly recognized as the figures of sleeping men. They had over-shot the mark, and had circled around to the detention camp.

Retreating hastily they held a whispered council. Notwithstanding the fact that the greater part of the raider's crew must be ashore, the camp appeared to be lightly guarded. Tommy Ormsby was for going back and carrying out the original plan of the surprise attack upon the three guards, pointing out that the indispensable signal fire hung upon the retrieval of their matches. But Howell thought that, now they were so near, they ought to try to communicate with the *Lucila's* people. While they hesitated, an entirely new face was put upon the situation by the approach, across the lagoon, of a boat from the *Seeprins*.

Their first thought was that their escape had been discovered and reported, and it became a matter of prime necessity that they should ascertain at once if this was the fact. Creeping around the glade circle to that part of the beach for which the boat was heading, they hid and waited. In due time the boat took ground within a few feet of their hiding place. The starlight enabled them to see that there were only two oarsmen and a single passenger; and the passenger, when he stepped ashore and gave a waiting order to his oarsmen, proved to be the fat-faced submarine commander. At the giving of the order he turned away, walked up the sandy slope and entered a small tent which had been pitched a little way apart from the guarded glade.

At this, the two watchers changed their position to one nearer the tent. A moment later a faint glow within the canvas walls betokened the lighting of a candle, and an exaggerated shadow showed them the burly figure of the newcomer seated upon a camp stool. A low murmur of voices disturbed the silence. The flap of the little tent had been left open and they could see another man seated upon a cot bed from which he had apparently just arisen. Tommy Ormsby opened a larger peep hole in the ground palm foliage and got a glimpse of the face of the man on the cot.

"Holtzberg!" he said, in a whisper that was scarcely more than a breath.

Again the perplexities were thickened. Why had the submarine commander come

ashore to waken a sick man after midnight? Did the conference have anything to do with the recent exhibition of flashes on the northern horizon? The talk in the tent went on in rumbling monotonies, but it was in German, and Tommy seemed to have lost his knack of catching even an odd phrase now and then. Suddenly, with a single word, "Wait!" he disappeared in the backward jungle.

For five minutes, ten minutes, an age, it seemed, Howell held his ground, hardly daring to draw his breath. Then through the medium of the sixth mysterious sense he knew that Ormsby had returned, and that he was not alone. A moment later Tommy crept up to report.

"Don't yell," he murmured in Howell's ear. "I went around to the other side of things and contrived to kidnap Marge. She knows German like a native, and she's back there behind the tent where she can hear what they are talking about."

At the moment—lover allegiance springing to the fore—Howell felt as if he could slaughter the plotter who had not scrupled to drag his sister into such hideous peril. But the thing was done, and could not be undone. Moreover, Tommy had disappeared again, doubtless to take his place beside the imperiled one.

For an interval not measurable in mere clock tickings the argument in the tent was prolonged. Without understanding the words, Howell knew that the submarine commander was urging something at which Holtzberg was revolting; something to which the middle-aged reservist was objecting strenuously. But at the last, after a moving shadow on the canvas advertised the leave-taking of the visitor, came a phrase which all the English-speaking world has come to understand in its full significance: "*zu befehl, Excellenz*," the yielding of an inferior to the command of his *superior*—and it was Holtzberg who uttered it!

The "Excellenz" was boarding his boat to return to the anchored ships when Tommy Ormsby stole up to beckon Howell away. A little distance apart in the wood, under a white-boled palm to which her brother had led her, they found the young woman. Howell could not see her face in those gloomy depths, but the nervous trembling of the hand she gave him told him what she had gone through.

"You can tell us, Margie?" he asked.

"Yes; I can tell you. These are not men into whose hands we have fallen: they are devils—fiends incarnate! Captain Holtzberg alone has some few impulses of humanity left. But he is a sick man, and he is outranked by the other."

"I gathered as much," said Howell. "He said '*zu befehl*' just as the submarine officer was leaving. That means 'as you command,' or something like that, doesn't it?"

"Yes, it means just that. But Captain Holtzberg didn't say it until after he had said everything he could against the cold-blooded plan of the other—Lieutenant Captain von Kriegspelter. This man is of the nobility, and a senior officer in the German navy—Captain Holtzberg's senior."

"And what is the plan?"

"It is simply murder—wholesale murder! Captain Holtzberg was angrily reprimanded for having taken prisoners from the ships he has been sinking. Now this Prussian *Graf* says we must all be killed; that the cause of the fatherland demands it. The ships, he says, should have been sunk without leaving any trace—especially here in American waters. Captain Holtzberg begged to be allowed to leave us all here on this island; to give us that much of a chance for our lives. But the *Graf* would not consent."

"What is to be done? Did that come out in their talk?" queried the brother, with a little shake in his voice.

"Yes. There is a warship—American or British—somewhere near us, on the watch for the *Seeprinz* and the submarine. The stop here has been made to allow the submarine to take oil and supplies from the *Seeprinz*. They are hurrying now to get away before daybreak. When they are ready to put to sea, Captain Holtzberg and his men will be taken back to their ship, leaving all of us prisoners here on the island. Then the *Seeprinz* will throw some gas shells ashore. The night is still, and there will be no wind to blow the gas away. In a few minutes, the *Graf* said, we would all be dead."

"They were not to give even you women a chance?" said Howell, aghast at the horrible plan.

"No. Dead men—and women—tell no tales. Those were his very words. Besides, we couldn't get away. Captain Holtzberg couldn't take us in the *Seeprinz*; and the *Lucita* has been sunk."

"The infernal demons!" gritted Tommy Ormsby.

"Yes," was the cool-voiced reply. "Some of them are demons and the others are mere blind machines, helpless to reason or to disobey an order, however barbarous it may be. Only fiends could have done what they did a few hours ago when that big ship was sinking. That is another thing: the *Graf* said that no one, not on the German side, who had witnessed that sinking must be allowed to live to tell of it."

"You saw that ship go down?" Howell demanded.

"I; but none of the others, I am thankful to say. But I—I shall see it the longest day I live; or I should if I were going to live."

"You say they have sunk the *Lucita*?" asked Tommy.

"Yes; it was after they put us ashore, just a few hours ago. They took the yacht outside of the reef and put some sort of an explosive in the hold. It was as cold-blooded as all the rest of it."

"Was it by Holtzberg's order, or the other man's," Howell queried.

"The *Grafs*, I think. Captain Holtzberg was ashore with us at the time, sick and shaking as if he had an ague. I think it was the sight of that sinking ship and the shelling of the lifeboats that made him sick. After they brought him ashore he sat by the fire for a while, staring into it and muttering over and over again, '*Schrecklichkeit—ach, mein Gott, mein Gott!*'"

Tommy Ormsby clutched Howell's arm. "We're killing time here when we ought to be busy!" he snapped. "That warship has got to be signaled in some way—and signaled quick!" Then, in clipped sentences because the minutes had grown suddenly precious, he told his sister of the mysterious light pencils they had seen on the northern horizon.

"You must go back to mother and dad," he wound up, "and that will leave Melly and me free to do what we've got to do. And you must get us some matches—matches, do you understand? We must have some, if we have to kill somebody to get them!"

Margaret Ormsby would have tried to find her way back to the glade by herself; wished to, but neither her brother nor Howell would consent to this. Together they led her to the edge of the encampment, and then

waited until she glided back to them, ghost-like, with Doctor Trimmell's match box.

"It was in his coat pocket, and I took it without awakening him," she whispered, adding: "Everybody seems to have fallen asleep—even the guards. Tell me what you are going to do, and let me help, if I can."

"You can't help; we are going to finish a job we began an hour or so ago," her brother returned grimly; but more than this he would not say.

Now, in all these hurried whisperings there had been no mention made of disastrous first causes; no self-reproachings on the part of the young men for having, through the linen-smuggling transaction, set in motion a train of events which was now threatening to terminate so murderously; no hint on Margaret's part that she, and all the others, knew the inculcating facts and had been trying in vain to find excuses for the smugglers.

So the parting moment, which might otherwise have cleared up all the mysteries and misunderstandings, held only a choked "Good-by—God keep you both safe!" And with that she vanished.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SIGNAL.

Waiting until they were assured that Margaret had reached her place in the circle about the extinguished camp fire, the two young men stole back to the beach and held another brief council. Now that the lives of all were at stake, Howell insisted that they must find some surer means of averting the massacre than a mere attempt to summon help by the expedient of lighting a brushwood fire.

"That notion is a back number, now," he declared. "Time is too valuable, and there are too many 'ifs' in the way. If we could gather dry wood enough—and that's doubtful, in the dark—the blaze would be seen first from the raider and the camp; which means that it would be surrounded and beaten out before it could get a fair start. We've got to think up something better than that."

"I'm already thinking of it," was Tommy Ormsby's prompt rejoinder. "How far is it out to that ship, Melly?"

Distances were deceptive in the starlight, but Howell offered a guess. "Three hundred yards, perhaps."

"That is what I should say; but I believe it is a bit shorter from the place where we were landed. Are you good for the swim?"

"Easily. But what's your idea?"

"The oil," said Tommy briefly. "Cut a hole in the hose and set the stuff afire. That will make the signal blaze to a fare-you-well; and give the Fritzies something to think about in the meantime."

"By Jove! that's an inspiration, Tom! Why didn't we think of that instead of the pump smashing? But we needn't put all our eggs in one basket. I'll swim off and try for the oil blaze while you go to the other end of the island and gather stuff for a last-resort bonfire—in case I get knocked out."

"I like your nerve," said Tommy quietly. "But there is one horribly good reason why we should both try the swim. I've been down this way before, and, as I've said, these waters are full of sharks—especially these island lagoons. If we both start, one of us may get through."

"That goes," said Howell, and together they ran up the beach to choose a spot from which the perilous swim could be reduced to its lowest terms in distance.

Now it is well known that the average human brain is apt to be unable, in moments of stress, to entertain two widely divergent ideas at the same time. Intent upon the new venture, neither of them remembered that the point toward which they were hastening was, or ought to be, enemy infested.

Hence, before they realized how far they had run, they were stumbling blindly over the three sleeping German sailors who had forgotten their duty under the spell of the warm tropical night; stumbling literally, since Howell tripped and fell headlong upon one of the recumbent figures before he could gasp out the word of warning to Tommy.

There and then blazed up a small battle which took no account of the Hague humanities. Knowing well that a single shout from the Germans would undo them, the two adventurers fought swiftly and desperately. In falling upon his unseen antagonist, Howell had made shift to clutch the man's gun; unable to rise and foreshorten the weapon for a stab with the bayonet or a blow with the butt, he brought the gun down across the German's face as one would break a stick over his knee, effectually stopping the shout that was already gurgling in the man's throat.

Tommy Ormsby, escaping the handicap of a fall, had the additional advantage of realizing fully what he was about when he sprang at the two upstruggling figures beyond Howell. He also made a clutch for a weapon, and was lucky enough to wrest one out of its owner's hands before the German could get upon his feet. Bayonet drill, as the Great War has developed it, was an unknown art to Ormsby, but no kiltie of them all could have delivered the close-quarters butt blow with better effect. Down went the thickset young Bremener with a gasp and a grunt; and, "*Kamerad!*" gurgled the third when both of the attackers rushed him, bayonet point to breast.

There was swift work when this third man, the only one capable of giving the alarm, was made to lie with his face in the sand to have his feet and hands tied, and a knotted handkerchief gag thrust between his teeth. For things were happening out on the lagoon; a lantern had appeared at the rail of the *Seeprins* and men were coming over the side. To bind and gag the two who had been knocked unconscious was the next job, and it was neatly finished before the boat—it was the dinghy again—had left the raider's side ladder.

"Take hold here with me, quick!" gasped Howell; and in a trice they had dragged the three silenced ones back into the jungle. By this time the boat was on its way to the shore. Oddly enough, as the two crouching watchers in the jungle's edge thought, the oarsmen—there were only two of them—seemed to be making no especial haste. It was Tommy Ormsby who first guessed the purpose of the leisurely expedition.

"It wasn't an alarm; it's only the guard relief!" he breathed. "They are coming to let these other fellows go aboard and turn in."

This conclusion was confirmed when the boat touched the sands. Three men with guns got out of it, leaving the two oarsmen behind. From their hiding place the two adventurers saw the three who had stepped ashore peering about in the starlight, evidently looking for those whom they were to relieve. Then one of them called, "*Hans—Ludwig—wo sint sie?*" Naturally, there was no answer; and after a moment the three plodded off up the beach in search of the missing ones, leaving the pair in the boat to wait for their return passengers.

"This is where the harbor sharks miss a

meal!" Tommy Ormsby exulted, as the three tramping figures faded into the night. "If those fellows will only go far enough and stay long enough——"

The wait that ensued was fiercely nerve trying, and to make it more so, the false aurora again appeared on the horizon, this time more to the westward and at a greater distance; proof positive and discouraging that the ship upon which all hope depended was edging farther away.

"For Heaven's sake, say *when!*" Tommy Ormsby gritted, his teeth chattering from excitement. But Howell would not give the word until the three trudging figures were out of sight and hearing.

When the time came, there was no possibility of stalking the men in the boat across the open stretch of white sand. So they shouldered two of the captured guns and marched boldly out of the wood, hoping that the boat's crew would mistake them in the darkness for two of the relieved guards. This was probably what happened, since they were within bayonet reach before either of the boatmen looked around.

"*Sprechen sie nicht!*" was Tommy Ormsby's sharp command; then, with another dip into the scanty vocabulary brought over from his boyhood, "*Kommen sie auf!*—come ashore—quick—*geschwind!*"

The mixed-language command—or more likely it was the threatening steel—had the desired effect. The two sailors tumbled over the thwarts in their haste to obey. What followed might have figured as the rough horseplay of a college fraternity initiation. In swift sequence the two captives were stripped, bound, gagged and dragged up into the bushes. A minute later Howell and Ormsby had struggled into the looted garments, were in the dinghy and on their way across to the *Seeprinz*.

"Some neat little job, that," chuckled Howell, toning his vigorous oar stroke to fit Tommy's lighter weight. "Two of us up and five of them down. Give us time and we might McCorkle the whole bunch—what?"

But Tommy was less exultant. "We're only on the edge of the real thing, yet. It's still a question of minutes. When that relief guard comes back and finds what it's bound to find, we'll hear something drop!"

With this thought for a spur they pulled harder and soon reached the side of the raider. Groping along the bilge they found

the rope ladder and made the dinghy fast. The plan of attack and retreat was quickly agreed upon. They would set the ship afire, if they could, and then try to escape to the small boat. Tommy Ormsby was dubious about the escape part of it. There were machine guns on the tramp-cruiser's bridge, and the light of an oil blaze would give the gunners point-blank range on the dinghy.

"We'll let the get-away take care of itself; time is what we need right now. We may have five minutes before those fellows ashore begin to bawl out, and we may not have one. Up you go."

Howell led in climbing the ladder. There was nobody in sight at the moment when he swung over the rail and made room for Tommy to follow, but almost immediately three men came aft, dragging a hawser—an evident preparation for warping the ship out through some opening in the reef. Again the adventurers took counsel of boldness. In the caps, leggings, and leather blouses they had taken from their two latest captures they pushed forward with nothing more alarming than a grunted "*Ja wohl!*" from one of the rope draggers.

Hugging the rail, and making no attempt at concealment, they saw again the inspiring electric flashes in the northwestern sky, but they were still far away.

"It's only a beggar's chance, now, that we can reach them with any signal we make," muttered Tommy; none the less, they pushed on, coming presently to the fore hatch, where the oil hose, pulsating like a living thing under the strokes of a power pump, lay before them.

It was Melly Howell, ex-football half back and specialist in damaged hearts, who knelt to puncture the greasy hose gently with the blade of the gold-handled cigar clipper. A thin jet of oil spurted from the stab, simulating, under the throbbing strokes of the pump, the gush of blood from a severed artery. A black pool formed upon the deck, spreading slowly athwartships as it grew in size. Howell leaned over the hatch coaming and made another puncture to let a second stream drip into the hold. Then he straightened up and made an even division of the matches taken from Doctor Trimmell's filched match safe.

"This time, Thomas, we're going to get our money's worth, and a little over and above for good measure," he whispered tri-

umphantly. "You stay here, and after I'm gone, count an even hundred strokes of that pump, like this"—timing the thumping beat. "At the hundredth stroke, strike your match and set the stuff afire."

"But what are you going to do?" demanded Ormsby.

"I'm going to make sure of getting our money's worth. Two fires are better than one. When you've scratched your match, sprint for the boat. I'll meet you there, if I'm still alive. Begin to count—I'm gone."

With the pump beats to keep time for him, Howell fled swiftly aft, counting as he went. Half of the hundred beats had been ticked off before he had made his way, still unrecognized, to the seaward side of the ship where the majority of the men on deck were strung along the rail, staring down upon the submarine. Swiftly his eyes sought and found the oil hose at the point where it went over the side. He had overshot the mark and had to change his position by cautious edgings; a proceeding which took time and still more time.

When he finally reached the desired point the counted pump strokes were in the last quarter of the hundred, and he was within a few feet of the nearest German. Stooping as if to ease the hose from cramping over the side of the vessel, he thrust the tapping blade into the rubber, inclining the cut downward so that the escaping oil would follow the hose and run down through the open hatch into the submarine.

Still counting methodically, he crouched, match in fingers, waiting for the firing signal. He knew it would be sheer suicide for him to strike a light with a score or more of the enemy looking on; that the time for action was not yet. While he knelt the measured thump of the machinery ticked off the seconds—ninety-four, ninety-five, ninety-six—Heavens! had Tommy Ormsby lost the count?—ninety-eight, ninety-nine—

There was no hundredth time beat. It was blotted out, swallowed up in a crescendo roar on the still night air as a sheet of flame, belching masthead high, shot up forward of the bridge. It was the signal for which Howell had been waiting. At the instant when all eyes were turned, panic-stricken, toward the leaping flame burst, he lighted his match and held it beneath the oil-dripping hose outboard.

What he was hoping for came to pass. Crude oil, containing in itself all of the

more volatile hydrocarbons, carries fire like a train of gunpowder. A tongue of flame ran down the hose, enveloping it in a sheath of fire. A fraction of a second later the open hatchway in the submarine's deck coughed like a choking monster of the deep, spouting a mushroomed column of sooty smoke that reddened into a lurid volcano eruption as it rose.

CHAPTER XIV.

BETWEEN DECKS.

In the panic precipitated by the simultaneous outbursts of fire on the raider and the submarine, escape seemed childishly easy to Tommy Ormsby. With the fire fighters falling over each other to get to their stations, men running, officers shouting, and the forward deck already a roaring furnace, he had but to lose himself in the frenzied mob and so make his way aft to the moored dinghy.

But upon reaching the point at which he and Howell had agreed to meet he found that the miraculous luck which had been with them through all the vicissitudes of the night had suddenly turned traitor. The mounting oil flames made the entire shut-in harbor as light as day; but Tommy, peering anxiously over the rail, saw only one object, namely, the dinghy, loose from its moorings at the foot of the side ladder and drifting slowly away.

An expert swimmer, he could have gone over the side and half a dozen strokes would have taken him to the boat. But he had no thought of deserting Howell. The crack of a pistol shot behind him made him spin around to face inboard. At the opposite rail he saw three struggling figures, and a fourth; Howell fighting berserk to free himself from the twining arms and legs of two sailors, while the fourth man, the *Seeprins's* first officer, Von Kaufmann, circled the three wrestlers warily, seeking an opening for a second shot which, better aimed than the first, should end the struggle.

With the battle lust singing in his veins, Tommy Ormsby ran to the rescue, hurling himself upon the circling lieutenant and recklessly ignoring the pistol, which went off harmlessly at the moment of impact. The diversion came in the nick of time. One of the sailors had locked a strangling arm around Howell's neck, and the other had

a knee in his back, but both let go when they saw their officer attacked.

This gave Howell his chance. With Von Kaufmann down and Tommy trying to kill him by the primitive method of banging his head against the deck, Howell flung himself joyously upon his two assailants. A straight-arm jolt put one of them out of the fight, and a left hook to the jaw that would have made a trained ring fighter envious settled the other. Before either could recover and close in again, Howell had dragged Tommy off of the lieutenant and ducked with him into the first refuge that offered, which happened to be the companion stairway.

Tumbling together to the foot of the steps and into the mess-room cabin, they slammed the door and locked it, and were thus secure for the moment. Howell was the first to grasp the possibilities of the forced situation.

"The dinghy!" he gasped. "There's an open port light under the ladder—I stuck my foot into it as we came aboard! That's our way out!"

But Tommy Ormsby shook his head.

"Nothing doing," he panted; "the boat's gone adrift. We must have tied a lubber's knot when we made it fast."

Howell was recovering some measure of the calculated audacity with which he had planned and executed the fire-setting raid; this though the blood was now running down his sleeve from a bullet wound in the shoulder—Von Kaufmann's attempt to end the three-cornered mêlée into which Tommy had so opportunely projected himself.

"All right," he agreed coolly. "We're trapped, hard and fast, but we can still make it cost them something to put us out of the game." And with that he disappeared, coming back presently with the two stolen automatics which had been hidden under the mattresses in their prison cabin.

With the safety catches of the weapons released, they posted themselves one on each side of the door giving upon the companion steps, waiting for the rush they made sure would speedily come. But there was no rush. Instead, they heard the companion slide slamming into place overhead, and by this they knew that the fire-fighting exigencies were calling for every man on deck, and that Von Kaufmann was content to apply the maxim "safe bind, safe find" for the time being.

The armistice was most welcome. Lighting the swinging lamp, Ormsby looked after the wound in Howell's shoulder. There seemed to be no bones broken, and a make-shift plug and bandage checked the bleeding. Up to now there had been little or no pain, the excitement of the fight affording a perfect anodyne. But the amateur surgery made him grit his teeth.

"Hurts like blazes, doesn't it," said Tommy. "But there's one comfort: if that suspected heart of yours can pull through all this rough stuff without stopping—"

"The heart's all right; likewise the football leg," gritted the patient. "I guess—the biggest crank—in the medical service—would pass me now."

Howell's wound attended to, Tommy Ormsby unlocked the door of defense and made a groping examination of the closed slide overhead.

"Once more there is nothing doing," he reported, when he came back; "everything battened down tight in that direction."

Next they tried the door of communication with the cook's galley and the crew's quarters, as well as that leading to the engine-room gangway; but these, too, were fastened. This left the open port light under the ladder as the only possible means of escape.

"Think you could swim a few strokes with that bandaged shoulder?" Tommy Ormsby inquired anxiously.

"I can try it," was the prompt reply. "I'd rather take a chance of drowning or being eaten by the sharks than to stay here and be burned alive."

"Carried unanimously. You think we've done for the ship properly, don't you?"

"Listen, and do your own guessing," said Howell.

The din of the fire had increased by this time to a furnace roar, with the thunder of it punctuated by crackling explosions indicating that the flames had reached the small-arms ammunition stores. Shouts, yells, the hiss of water cataracting upon heated metal, and the furious stamp and go of the steam fire pumps added to the pandemonium.

"It sure is making a noise like it!" said Tommy, with a fighting man's grin. Then: "Melly, I'll be dogged if we haven't made a pretty fair beginning for a couple of amateurs. Two little old American quitters—that's what they were calling us at home—with bare hands and a box of matches, have

put this pirate hooker out of commission—to say nothing of the submarine. If I had a flag I'd wave it!"

"I'm not so sure about the submarine," said Howell doubtfully. "I don't know much about the construction of the beasts, but I should think they'd be built so that a fire in the tank compartment could be flooded. But this isn't getting us anywhere. Shall we try the high dive from that open port light?"

But the first thing to be done was to locate the port, and when its position was guessed out they found that it must be in the after cabin, which was Captain Holtzberg's. The door was locked, but Tommy made a battering-ram of the mess table and drove it off its hinges. The commander's cabin was quite spacious and was fitted with an eye to comfort, not to say luxury, with a bed instead of a sleeping berth, a built-in bookshelf, a library table with a reading light, and an old-fashioned, heavy secretary desk. There were two port lights, but only one of them was open. The other was shut and barred.

Through the open port they could see the rope ladder dangling from the rail above; it could be easily reached and would help in the wriggling escape through the circular opening. Tommy Ormsby had dragged a chair under the port and was about to thrust his head out when Howell stopped him.

"Hold on," he interposed; "let's try it on the dog, first," and at his suggestion Tommy made a dummy out of a blanket stripped from the bed, stuck the stolen cap he was wearing on the end of it and thrust it out of the port. Instantly a rifle spat a tongue of flame from the rail above and cap and blanket were perforated.

"I thought perhaps they wouldn't be too busy to leave a sniper up there to get us," was Howell's comment. Then: "We're nipped, Tommy; we're here to stay until they come after us—or the ship blows up. About as long as it is broad, anyway. You can see how light it is out there, and we couldn't swim very far under water. They'd get us with the machine gun when we came up to breathe, even if we didn't have that sniper overhead to reckon with."

Since they could do nothing but wait and hope that their chance might come later, they crossed to starboard and tried to get some idea of how the fire attack was go-

ing on in the case of the U-boat, using the barred port light of their former quarters as a spying hole. The sight was not altogether encouraging. The tank hatch of the underwater ship was no longer vomiting fire, and from a hose overhead a stream of something which was not water was shooting into it.

"Sand!" gasped Tommy; "they're blowing sand into it with an air hose! Is there anything on top of earth that these beggars haven't thought of and prepared for beforehand?"

"They'll save the submersible," said Howell. "Of the two ships it is worth the most to them—for war purposes. We've got one more chance for success, Tom—though we shan't be here to see how it works out. If they can't stop the blaze you lighted up forward, this hooker will presently blow up and sink and take the U-boat with her. To prevent this, they'll probably cast off when they get the fire smothered in the tank hold and try to move the submarine out of danger. They've doubtless got an emergency fuel supply they can use at the pinch."

Since the kennel cabin was as hot as a furnace from its juxtaposition to the volcano blast which had come up out of the submersible, they retreated, first to the mess cabin, and then to the captain's quarters. It was the open port that drew them; their one avenue of escape if any new development on deck should favor them.

That the sniper was still waiting for them overhead they learned by another trial of the blanket-roll dummy, which was promptly fired upon as before. Beginning to lose some of the fine stimulus of excitement, and to feel the effects of his wound, Howell sat down in the pivot chair before the captain's desk. The desk closed with a lid like a folding table leaf, and by the light reflected from without, Howell saw that the key had been left in the lock. Almost mechanically he reached up and turned the key. At the click of the bolt the table-leaf lid fell open as if actuated by a spring.

Howell's natural impulse was to close and lock the desk. Then his eye fell upon an electric flash light lying in one of the pigeon-holes, and he took it out and pressed the switch. The batteries were alive, and in the flash of the light he saw that the desk lid, in opening, had brought down with it a spread-out map or chart.

One glance showed that the chart covered the Caribbean, the islands of the Spanish Main, the northern coasts of South America, and the eastern coast of Central America. A number of the islands, and some few points on the two mainlands, were marked in red ink; some with a circle, others with a cross, still others with both cross and circle. In the corner of the sheet was the explanatory legend, written in slanting German script, and even Howell's scanty knowledge of the language enabled him to translate it. Opposite the sign of the circle were the words "coal" and "oil," and against the cross mark, "wireless."

Howell did not have to look twice to determine the tremendous importance of his find.

"Tom!" he called, shouting to make himself heard above the din of noises; and when Tommy was staring down at the map: "Thomas, my son, there is the most important war document that ever fell into the hands of an enemy! That chart gives the location of all the secret German bases we've been reading so much about; the fuel stations and the wireless outfits!"

"Where did you find it?"

"It was right here when I opened the desk. Holtzberg was probably studying it when he was taken sick and neglected to hide it."

Ormsby passed the flash light slowly over the spread-out map. "Say!" he ejaculated, "wouldn't that make an angel weep? Here's a thing that, if it could be put into the hands of our people in Washington, would save hundreds of lives and thousands of tons of shipping—and we've got it and can't get away with it!"

Howell grabbed for the chart, folded it hurriedly, and staggered to his feet.

"Search in the desk, quick, Tom: there must be an oilskin case or some waterproof thing to put this in—they'd never take a chance of its getting wet. That's it"—as Ormsby found the oiled-silk wrapping—"Take it and wrap it as if your soul's salvation was folded up in that sheet of drawing paper and hide it next to your skin. It's worth a nation's ransom, Tom!"

"That's all right; but why are you giving it to me? When this ship blows up, I guess I'll sail just about as far up, and come down just as hard, as you will."

Howell's eyes were shining.

"It's for all-America, now, Tom. We

had a perfect right to wait for the blow-up when there were only a couple of lives—and those our own—to consider. But now we've simply *got* to live and get away—or one of us must. I'm crippled, and your chance is the—"

The interruption was a violent concussion that shook the ship from stem to stern. Tommy Ormsby caught at the wounded one and so saved him from being thrown down.

"Wh-what was that?" he stammered; "one of the boilers?"

For answer the concussion was repeated. Then they knew.

"The warship!" Howell burst out. "It's coming, and the Germans have opened fire on it with the big guns in the bow!"

CHAPTER XV.

OLD GLORY.

Though the discovery of the chart had absorbed them for the moment, the increasing tumult on deck brought them back with a snap to things present and threatening. At the first alarm of fire the raider's motor launch had been sent ashore for reinforcements, and it had been bringing the *Seepriinz's* men off from the island as rapidly as it could go and return. And now the thunder of the raider's "heavies" told that Holtzberg's gun crews were braving the oil flames to work their pieces.

At the second crash Tommy Ormsby thrust the oiled-silk package inside of his shirt, and they both hurried across to get an outlook to starboard. The glass in the port light in their kennel cabin had been cracked by the heat of the submarine volcano, and some of the pieces had fallen out. With only the smoke reek still rising from the submersible's oil-tank hatch to obstruct the view they could see the boundary reef and the open sea beyond. Far out, but still well within the wide-flung illumination of the burning raider, a long, four-funneled ship, with high bows and a cut-down hull that was almost buried in the huge bow wave, was racing eastward on a course parallel with the northern shore of the island.

Almost immediately the raider's guns crashed again, one after the other, and the watchers at the broken port light fancied they could see the plunge of the shells falling short of the racing target.

"What I want to know is why that ship out yonder doesn't hit back," cut in Tommy

Ormsby impatiently. "There's all the chance in the world in this glare of light."

"Light metal," said Howell—"it's a destroyer, and if it's one of ours, it doesn't carry anything bigger than very small rapid-firers. The German 'heavies' outrange them."

"If it's one of ours—look—look at the flag, Melly! Rah for Old Glory! Look!—do you see it?"

There was no reason for not seeing it. With the speed of the flying destroyer to give it a breeze the ensign stood out as flat as a board. Tommy's eyes filled and he found himself knuckling them like a crying boy.

"The good old flag!" he exulted. "Look, Melly: that fellow who is flying it knows what he's doing. He's still holding eastward; he knows this hooker's armament, and he's going astern of us where he can come up within his own range and not take the fire from the 'heavies.'"

Howell was staring through the broken port light at the almost invisible hull of the destroyer ripping through the sea at the speed of a railroad train. Suddenly, clean-cut admiration for the courage, German or other, that would fight a doomed ship to the last and in the face of certain destruction, came uppermost.

"Thomas, we'll have to hand it to the Fritzies, after all—they've got a nerve! Those fellows up forward are roasting in hell fire and they don't know a minute that they won't be blown to bits, and yet they're serving those guns as if they were firing a kaiser's salute!"

"Right you are; but there is some little courage scattered around out there on that destroyer, too. That fellow out there is so eager to get into the fight that he's taking the short cut when he might take more time and keep out of range."

"That's the American of it," said Howell.

"Right, again!" bubbled Tommy Ormsby. "And when he gets around where he can open up with his light artillery, we'll be killed by perfectly good American shells. There's some comfort in that."

"But we mustn't be killed—or at least, you mustn't!" Howell broke in, reawakening suddenly to the importance of saving the precious chart found in Captain Holtzberg's desk. "Suppose we go back and try that open port again. Maybe by this time things

are warm enough on deck to rattle that sniper of ours."

They recrossed the ship the more willingly since there was nothing more to be seen from the starboard peep hole. The destroyer had passed beyond their line of vision, and the raider's guns were no longer firing—a proof that the flanking enemy had passed astern. Instead of the measured booming of the big bow guns there were thunderous noises to indicate a rush of the raider's defenders aft, dragging some heavy object with them.

"Again we'll hand it to the Fritzies, Tom," said Howell. "They've had to quit on the 'heavies,' and now they've dismounted a rapid-firer and are bringing it aft."

It was a keen punishment not to be able to witness the fight of the Germans against the double odds, with an enemy getting their range astern, and fire and explosion menacing them on their own decks. The discipline in the face of the double peril was fine; so much the two captives between decks could assume from the unceasing grind of the fire pumps and the hiss and swish of water pouring upon the conflagration forward.

Shortly, too, the rapid-firer which had been transferred to the ship's stern set up its barking challenge to the destroyer. This meant that the American ship was hauling up outside of the boundary reef at the eastern end of the islet.

"Our time is short, now," Howell prophesied, as they were recrossing the main cabin.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before there came a swift series of tearing explosions forward. In the clamor and confusion they could not tell whether it was the destroyer getting the range, or the raider's fixed ammunition being set off by the fire. But all doubt was removed when a shell came crashing through the deck overhead, exploding against the bulkhead in the mess room and filling the place with flying shards.

Almost instinctively they had thrown themselves flat at the impact of the shell, and were only dazed by the shock and choked by the acrid powder gases. But when the next shell ripped the companion head into scrap, showering the main cabin with a cataract of debris, Tommy Ormsby sprang up and dragged Howell to his feet.

"This time we take the high dive, sniper

or no sniper!" he shouted; and as one man they made a dash for the captain's cabin.

With the destroyer's shells chasing each other like bullets from a machine gun they did not stop to make any cautionary experiments at the open port. The rope boarding ladder was still hanging from the rail; Tommy Ormsby kicked off his shoes and using the ladder for an outhaul, dragged himself through the circular opening. Outside, and safely anchored upon the ladder, he gave a hasty glance above, more than half expecting to find himself looking into the muzzle of a German rifle. But a mad inferno was raging upon the raider's after deck and the rail was empty.

"Quick!" he yelled, swinging back to the port. "Easy with that game shoulder—I'll help you!"

Though the rail above had been partly torn away by one of the shell bursts, the ladder held while Howell was making his escape. But with the weight of two of them upon it, it tore loose and went by the board, dropping them as straight as a plummet into the water. Remembering the crippling shoulder, Tommy Ormsby retained his hold upon Howell, and had sufficient presence of mind to mark the direction of the drifting dinghy as they fell.

Actuated by the same impulse, they both swam under water as long as they could. But when they were forced to the surface to breathe they saw there was little need for concealment. The raider's people were far too busy to pay any attention to a pair of half-drowned swimmers. None the less, they went under again, and a second emergence brought them up on the shoreward side of the drifting boat. Ormsby climbed into it first and held the boat on an even keel while Howell got his good arm and a leg over the gunwale. A pull and a struggle did the rest, and for the moment they were safe.

But only momentarily. In its slow drift the dinghy had not gone more than a few fathoms from the raider's side, but the drift had been diagonal and the escaping captives found themselves quartering astern of the *Seeprinz*, and none too far out of the destroyer's line of fire. When it became evident that the Germans were still too busy to concern themselves with the affairs of a derelict small boat, Tommy Ormsby got an arm over the gunwale and, paddling vigorously, succeeded in backing the small craft

some little distance out of the immediate danger zone.

From this temerarious offing, which was possibly a hundred yards from the burning ship, they could see the destruction wrought by the destroyer's shells which were still coming over in a steady stream. The raider's after deck and superstructure were already smashed and wrecked, and a new blaze had broken out aft of her funnel. Singularly enough, the single gun dragged aft by the Germans had not yet been put out of action; though the rain of shells was taking a horrible toll on the exposed decks, there were still men and more men to serve the gun.

"That isn't courage any more; it's sheer suicide!" Tommy Ormsby gasped. "Why in God's name haven't they got sense enough to know when they're done in?"

But it was exactly at this juncture that the reason for the desperate resistance in the face of certain destruction became apparent. By some miracle of fire fighting with the sand showers, or otherwise, the blaze had been extinguished in the tank hold of the submarine; and now, with its Diesels going and the water churning under its stern, the underwater boat was edging away from its burning consort.

"There's the answer," said Howell quickly. "The *Seeprinz* is done for, and they know it. But there is still a chance for the U-devil to put to sea and escape if it can get outside of the reef and submerge. That's why those fellows on the raider are fighting to the death. They know well enough what's coming to them, but they're trying to keep the gunners on the destroyer too busy to see what is going on!"

"That's it," said Tommy Ormsby. "Yet once again we must hand it to Fritz for the cold nerve." Then, when it became plain that the U-boat was still using its surface motive power: "Why doesn't the beggar submerge? Every second he stays up makes it more impossible for those poor devils on the cruiser to surrender and save themselves! Isn't the lagoon deep enough to let him go down?"

Howell shook his head. "The harbor may be deep enough, but quite likely the passage through the reef isn't: that must be the reason. See! he's making the turn now to head for the passage. Suffering cats! why don't they pot him from that destroyer? Surely they must see him!"

That the escaping submarine was seen was proved an instant later by the explosion of one of the destroyer's shells in close proximity to the conning tower. No apparent damage resulted, and the U-boat contained its slow drive for the break in the reef. A second shell and a third failed to halt it, this though the third seemed to score a direct hit upon the low, water-washed deck.

Tommy Ormsby groaned. "It must be one of those supersubmersibles we've been hearing about," he lamented; "the class they're armoring so that it takes a big gun to make a dent in them!"

Whether this was true or not, it was an indisputable fact that the underwater boat was making good its escape. Under increasing headway it surged for the opening in the reef, the *Seeprinz* gunners still working their forlorn-hope rapid-firer to cover the retreat. A half minute later the submarine wallowed through a narrow gap in the coral barrier and immediately began to submerge.

"We've lost it—we've lost it!" raged Tommy Ormsby, falling back between the thwarts of the dinghy. But Melly Howell's, "Look!—look at that, will you?" brought him up again with a jerk.

The sight was enough to make the blood leap in the most sluggish veins. The men on the destroyer had marked the escape and their vessel was under way, rounding the eastern angle of the reef with the speed of a hydroplane. Under a hot rifle and machine-gun fire from the after deck of the blazing raider the swift sea scout came tearing along like a whirlwind, heading straight for the slowly disappearing submersible.

"They're too late—they'll never get there in time to ram!" gritted Howell.

"No; but—"

Tommy Ormsby's grip on the dinghy's gunwale became clamplike. The destroyer was rushing at full speed directly over the spot where, but an instant before, the periscopes of the submerging U-boat had been cutting their double ripple. One—two—three seconds later a shock like that of a miniature earthquake rocked the dinghy, and a few fathoms from the place where the submarine had disappeared a huge white column of foam rose with leisurely grandeur, ten feet, twenty feet, thirty feet into the air to fall like a dissolving waterspout with a crash and an upheaved circular wave

that surged and widened and broke the swinging time beat of the surf.

"A depth bomb!" Howell gasped shakily; and already the evidences of the bomb's obliterating effect upon the underwater ship were washing in upon the wavelets swelling through the rift in the reef—wreckage, glistening oil pools, and here and there the bodies of men, blown unaimed, as it seemed, out of their living tomb.

It was not until the passing of this tremendous climax had a little relieved the excitement and battle stress for them that the fugitives in the drifting dinghy became aware of a threatened change in the weather. But now that they looked they saw that the stars had been blotted out, and the reddened flare of the burning ship was reflected from a suddenly drawn curtain of clouds.

With the lull in the battle actual a sort of paralysis seemed to have fallen upon the living remnant left upon the raider's decks. Picked out like a heroic figure in the red glow they could see the tall form of the sick ober-kommander gesticulating and apparently exhorting his men to arouse themselves against a return of the enemy.

Out at sea, the destroyer was careening sharply to come about. But she was not heading for the island; she was turning her high bow stiffly to the southwestward and holding it there.

"What does that mean?" said Tommy Ormsby, and as he said it a gust of wind, as chilling as if it had blown out of a glacier cavern, checked the shoreward drift of the dinghy and set it in motion the other way—toward the reef; did this, and made a huge blowpipe flame of the blazing ship.

There was no time for a reply, if the wounded man in the bottom of the small boat had meant to make one. With a lightning flash that illuminated the farthest horizons and a crash of thunder that was like a collision of worlds, the tropical storm burst in sudden and irresistible fury upon the islet and the surrounding main. The castaways in the dinghy heard the roar of the hurricane blast as it struck the island; heard the tall palms snapping like pipestems in its path; felt their frail craft sent spinning, as if from the buffet of a giant hand, through a maelstrom of mad waters churning over the sunken reef and past it to the waste of wild waters beyond, far and away until the light of the burning cruiser had lost itself in the storm wrack to windward.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEPETHS AND HEIGHTS.

With the hurricane blowing itself out by degrees as it swept the dinghy onward, Tommy Ormsby baled madly and by unceasing toil contrived to keep the boat from filling and capsizing as the seas rose higher and higher. By some providential miracle—the oars had been washed away and he could do nothing toward directing the dinghy's course—the capsize had been averted; but the dawn, which brought a sudden dropping of the wind, clear skies, and a blazing sunrise, heralded little else of an encouraging nature. The waves were still running perilously high, there was no land in sight, and they were adrift without food or water.

To make matters worse, Howell's wound was beginning to make itself felt as a crippling disablement. Being a real man, in spite of the home cossetting which had been so liberally dealt out to him in his youth, he strove to put a cheerful face on the matter; but after the sun had risen high enough to turn on the furnace heat of a tropical day the terrible thirst of the wounded seized upon him and the depressive reaction throttled him.

"I know now how those poor fellows feel who are smashed and left to linger and suffer in No Man's Land, Tom," he said. And a little later: "Ours was a short life and a merry one, wasn't it?"

"I'm not regretting any part of it," was the exultant rejoinder. "I'm only sorry we couldn't stick around long enough to see what became of the *Seeprinz*."

Howell rocked his head on the thwart.

"There are a frightful lot of questions unanswered—that are going to stay unanswered for us. What did the hurricane do to the people left on the island—to our people? Did the destroyer weather it and go back after them? And if it did, was there anybody left alive to be taken off? We'll never know."

"Oh, see here, Melly, old man—you mustn't go off on that tack!" the other cast-away protested hastily. "I know you're pretty well done in, but we'll never say die till we're dead. For all we know, that destroyer may be combing the sea for us this blessed minute."

"Nothing like it. There's no reason why it should be, and you know it, Tom. We left Margie to infer that we were going to

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try to signal the outside ship with a bonfire of some kind, but neither she, nor anybody else on the island, would suppose for a moment that we had any such harebrained idea as that of setting the raider afire. Therefore we have merely disappeared in the general smash—with any number of ways to account for the disappearance without hinting at the real one."

"Oh, well," said Tommy, trying another expedient; "if you will insist on looking at it through blue glass. I'm an optimist, myself; choose to believe that we're going to be picked up. The Caribbean isn't so tremendously big, and we're still inside of the Little Indies."

Again the wounded man wagged his head, passing his uncrippled hand over his face.

"I need a shave horribly bad, and so do you," he remarked. And then: "We may as well look this thing square in the eye. You know as well as I do that we can't hold out very long under this sun and without water, to say nothing of the lack of food—or, if you can, I can't hope to. And that reminds me: have you got that chart safe yet?"

Tommy investigated. He had not thought of the precious map since the moment when he had dropped from the port of the *Seeprinz* on the falling rope ladder. It was safe. The oiled-silk wrapper had leaked, of course, and the heavy parchment paper was swollen and blistered. But the ink was the indelible sort, and the lines and lettering were still legible.

"Let it dry in the sun and then wrap it up again," Howell directed. "The best we can hope for now is that the dinghy will stay right side up and be sighted at last by some American vessel. They'll search us, no matter how dead we are, and the chart will be found."

Once more Tommy made a valiant effort to put the cheer into cheerfulness for his companion. The sea was going down visibly now, and it no longer menaced the stability of the storm-tossed small boat. With the lessening height of the waves the outlook was wider, which meant that their chance of being seen by some passing vessel was proportionally increased.

"It's no use, Tom"—this from the disheartened one after these encouraging symptoms had been descanted upon. "I'm not kicking, you know. We did our little

bit—and did it plenty well and good, at that.”

“I know,” said Tommy; adding, after a pause: “So am I, Melly. What have you got on your chest? Chuck it out, and we’ll try to settle it while there’s time.”

“This, for the biggest thing,” was the rather shaky reply. “As we’ve left things, nobody will ever know that we weren’t what all Middlesboro was calling us when we left—quitters, and traitors to boot, if the linen smuggling ever gets on the gossip wires. Your sister thinks we were responsible for the *Lucita’s* change of course that first night out of Jacksonville, and, by consequence, for all that has followed. And what she thinks, the others must think, too. I don’t want to drop out and leave all that horrible mess of misunderstanding behind to rankle forever and ever.” He made a feeble gesture toward the drying map. “If you had something to write with, and could put it on the back of that,” he suggested; “the real story of it, I mean.”

Rather to quiet and satisfy the wounded man than as a concession to his own growing fear that their chances for a rescue were exceedingly small, Tommy Ormsby began to search for a pencil. Of course, the search was fruitless. In the fierce heat of the raider’s between decks they had thrown off the leather blouses looted from the two stripped submarines at the capture of the dinghy; and their own pockets yielded nothing but the cigar clipper, the doctor’s match safe, and one of the stolen automatics—the other having been lost in the plunge overboard from the burning ship.

It was the automatic that furnished the writing implement. True, the bullets in its magazine were nickel-covered, but Tommy Ormsby patiently extracted one of them from its cartridge and pried its nickel shell off with the blade of the cigar cutter. With the core of soft lead thus obtained, the back of the chart for paper, and one of the boat’s thwarts for a writing table, he wrote out the story of the business struggle with its reasons for secrecy, of the real object of the projected voyage to Norfolk, and a brief sketch of the battle night and the part they had borne in it.

“That’s the thing,” Howell approved, twisting his thirst-swollen tongue to the words after Tommy had read the painfully written screed aloud. “Margie’ll understand, and now I can ‘go west’ in peace. I

guess we may borrow that word from the fellows ‘Over There,’ both of us. For we’ve been soldiers, too, Tom—for—a little—while.”

It was mid-forenoon and the sun was like a ball of fire in the heavens. A brazen sky looked down upon a glassy sea which reflected the glare and the killing heat. With a bit of canvas found under the stern sheets of the dinghy, Tommy Ormsby rigged a tiny square of shade for the wounded man’s face. Shortly afterward, Howell lapsed into a muttering stupor, and Tommy realized with a sinking heart that this might be the beginning of the end.

Thereafter, sun-scorched and perishing with a thirst that seemed like a living fire kindled in his throat, the one whose time had not yet come sat through the long hours of the torrid day, searching the horizon with smarting eyes that had somehow lost the ability to wink and shut out the blinding glare. And always there were only sea and sky; the sea like a pot of incandescent metal capped by the sky of brass. More than once he felt his senses reeling, and at such crises he tightened his grip upon the gunwales of the dinghy. “Never say die till you’re dead.” It was the Ormsby motto, and toward the end the words marched through his brain in a maddening procession: “Never say die till you’re dead—never say die till you’re dead—never say—”

The sun was poised, a great globe of orange fire, on the undulating western horizon, and for the last time, before it should sink into the waters and leave the horizons blotted out in darkness, he raised himself to drive the tired eyes once more around the hopeless circle. When they had covered half the circle, and he saw a four-funneled ship with high, cutaway bows apparently no more than a short mile away, his dry lips parted in a cackling laugh and he tumbled over into the bottom of the dinghy. For by the apparition, which could be nothing but the conjuring of a crazy brain, he knew the demon of thirst had triumphed and the end had come.

Also, it figured as another phase of the crazy dream when he heard voices—men’s voices and the sobbing cry of a woman—and felt, rather than saw, the shadow of the phantom ship coming between him and the level rays of the setting sun. In the dream there were strong hands to lift him, and the dream became a sort of vague reality when

he pointed to Melly Howell and made his parched lips mumble the words, "Careful with him—wounded, y' know." Then came the great blank.

When Melly Howell of the damaged heart—and shoulder—opened his eyes again upon the things that are, his first impression was that he was back in the cubby-hole cabin of the German raider, snugly tucked into one of the bunks which had curiously grown even narrower than it had originally been. Then he realized gropingly that it was not the prison cabin, and that the figure sitting on a stool at the bunkside was not that of a guarding German sailor.

"Margie!" he gurgled weakly.

"Yes, dear"—and she bent over him.

She told him where he was; on board the destroyer—in the commander's cabin—under Doctor Trimmell's care. "And you're going to live, Melly, dear," she quavered; "thank God, you are going to live!"

"Sure I'm going to live: did anybody think I wasn't? Are you—are you all alive?"

"Every one of us. The storm smashed half the trees on the island to bits but we all escaped in some way."

"The Englishmen and all?"

"Yes; and Sarskjold and the *Lucita's* crew."

"That Swede," said Howell, harking back to the beginning of the troubles; "something ought to be done with him."

"Something has been done. They are holding him and all his men for an investigation, which will probably end in an internment camp."

"And the German ship—the *Seeprins*; what became of it?"

"It went down with all on board. We couldn't see in what manner; whether it blew up or was wrecked on the reef. At daybreak the destroyer came back; it had been obliged to run away from the hurricane. The men, English sailors and all, searched every foot of the island for you and Tommy. When they couldn't find you we thought you must have been blown into the sea and drowned; that was the only thing there was to think."

"Then what happened?"

"The destroyer commander—he's Bob Hazard, our Middlesboro Bob—sent out wireless calls for a ship to come and take

the Englishmen aboard; he hadn't room for them, but he made room for us. We left the island about noon after the wireless had told us that another ship was on the way from Jamaica. I never want to live through such another day, Melly!"

"That was yesterday?"

"The day before yesterday. It was just at sunset when our lookout saw your little boat. When we came up, we all thought you were both dead."

"I wasn't, it seems. How about Tom?"

"He is all right now. It was only thirst with him. He could hardly speak when we got him aboard. It was pitiful to see Allie Trimmell go to pieces when she saw Tom alive—after she had been thinking all day that he was dead. She is so sane and self-controlled ordinarily, you know."

"Yes; I know. Now tell me how long I'm going to be laid out."

"The doctor won't say. If you could have had attention sooner—"

"It mustn't be for long, Margie, girl. I've got to get back into it, you know. I suppose Tom has told you how we came to be floating around at sea in an open boat?"

"We found the German chart and saw what Tom had written on the back of it when—when you both thought you—mightn't—be found alive. Oh, Melly, dear!

"It was turned over to Lieutenant Hazard. Goodness! I never saw a man so excited. Inside of five minutes he had the wireless going. We have orders to race straight for Hampton Roads at our best speed. Bob says it means nothing less than a commission for each of you two—the chart, and the sinking of the raider and the submarine."

"We don't care anything about commissions—until we can earn them like other men, Margie. We're in 'for duration,' as jackies, if that's what they need most. Tom's all right, and as for me—I'm hoping the 'medics' are going to set that night's job on the raider over against the cracked heart and the game football leg; that's what I'm hoping and praying, Margie, girl."

"Of course they will"—scornfully. "And the cracked heart—it's mine, Melly, dear, and I'll mend it and keep it, and—"

"A few minutes ago you said this wasn't heaven, but I know better," he murmured. "Once more, with a long breath, sweetheart, and then I'll try to go to sleep."

Ball Three!

By H. C. Witwer

Author of "Confidence," "Pretty Soft," Etc.

"Welcome back home!" we all cry upon seeing Witwer return to us. He is one of the true sons of "Popular." This new story of his is a whizzer, as might be expected. In it he introduces his inimitable ball players and their brilliant (?) repartee. But aside from talk, the bunch pull a brand-new play inspired by a nimble-witted son of Israel.

THEY is a old sayin' which claims that anything goes in love, war, stud poker and Irish stew. I got another entry to add to this here collection, the same bein' the fairly well-known game of baseball. I been implicated in them mad dashes for pennants and world's series dough almost since St. Looey and last place become the same thing, which is a long time—bein' forever. Durin' my connection with this hit-and-run thing I have done everything on a ball field except shave the umpire, and I once come near ownin' a club of my own, but was saved by layin' off the booze and takin' aspirin. I have also picked up a lot of things besides a bat, and I'm satisfied they is more angles to baseball than they is to a fishhook. Many's the game has been won or lost far from the diamond, and brains is as useful to a ball player as a horse is to a jockey, no matter what them sportin' writers says to get laughs. Many a guy is up there in the big league to-day when he should of been drafted to some rheumatic asylum years ago, simply because he's usin' his head for somethin' besides a place for his cap.

Since I been a manager I've hired and fired three guys for every Frenchman in Paris, and I've found out a lot about this human-nature thing, too. They is no use goin' into the box score on that part of it, because I'm a ball player and not a college, but they is one kind of guy I want to tip you off about and that's the baby which goes through life givin' a endless imitation of a worm. The guy that never comes back no matter what you call him, the boob you

play all the tricks on and the worst he does is grin, the hick, the fall guy, the poor, good-natured simp whose existence is one round of third-degree initiations into the lodge of life.

Look out for that bird! I'll tell the world fair when he *does* get started, I wanna be elsewhere. It takes them babies a long while to get wise to the fact that they's other parts in the show besides that of the clown, but when they *do* get warmed up—Oh, boy! 'Take a tip from me and keep outa traffic, because they ain't nothin' wilder in the zoo than a maddened boob, and the first guy they nail gets the benefit of all the rough stuff they been forced to take for years.

It's comical too, the things that set 'em goin'. You may be maulin' one of them guys around every day for months, and pullin' things on 'em that a dyin' cripple wouldn't take, and then all of a sudden you'll claim they don't know how to play parcheesi or somethin' and Zam! You have fin'ly hit the raw spot, and the next few minutes is bound to be the most excitin' you spent since you fell off the dock when a innocent child.

I will now present for the first time on any page a example of this.

When the alarm clocks went off at Washington and khaki become the very latest for the fashionable and unexempt young feller of twenty-one to thirty-one, my ball club fell apart like a secondhand flivver. For a coupla weeks I got the idea that the guys in charge of the draft figured my team could lick the kaiser all by themselves, and they

wasn't no use of sendin' over anybody else. I lost more men than the Germans did at the Marne, and I fin'ly tried to get in the army myself, but I couldn't get a ticket on account of bein' too old for such innocent pastimes like war. At the time when this tour of Europe started to become all the rage, my club was runnin' next to last and makin' frantic attempts to get farther back than that, so I guess the reason the exemption guys put my club in Class A was because we was playin' that kind of ball.

Well, when the army got done with me I had about four guys left that knowed the difference between third base and the clubhouse, and they was all old enough to of been on the reception committee which went down the bay to meet Columbus on the first trip he made over here. The club owners is crazy because our percentage and the attendance was fallin' off like Salome's veils, and they told me to patch up a team which could finish the season without droppin' out of the league altogether, or I'd have to take up plumbin' or the like for a livin'. They claimed I could spend money like water, and I knowed from experience what they meant by that. Did you ever try to spend any water?

By the end of July I was at least able to put nine men on the field and by the middle of August we was makin' almost as many runs a game as errors. In a coupla weeks more we begin winnin' games to the astonishment of everybody, includin' ourselves. The owners quit lookin' up prices on car-bolic acid and told me if I could finish in the first division they would give every man on the team a bonus and present me with everything but the franchise. They claimed it ought to be easy, now that we was hittin' our stride, and then all we had to beat was the Giants, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, St. Looley, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati. Soft, eh?

Well, outside of the other eight positions, they was one place where we was very weak and that was first base. The bird which was drawin' a salary for clutterin' up that bag acted like every ball throwed at him was a six-inch shell and what's the use of gettin' killed. Also, he seemed to have the idea that hittin' the pill was a violation of the penal code and stealin' a base meant the gallows. If the crowd had ever called me what it called him, I would of at least throwed a hand grenade into the bleachers!

Joe Heiland, which claimed he was playin' third for me, tells me in the clubhouse one day that he knows where I can get hold of a good ball player cheap.

"Fine!" I says. "See if your unction will fit him."

"No kiddin'," he says. "This guy is there! I seen him play with Jersey City last year, and he's another Hal Chase."

"That ends it!" I says. "I seen them birds which is another Hal Chase or another Ty Cobb. I suppose if you went out and win yourself ten bucks in a crap game, you'd think you was another J. P. Morgan, hey? Forget about that stuff! When them dead ringers for Chase and Cobb get on a big-time ball field the only resemblance I ever been able to see is that they all wear their ears on the sides of their heads!"

"Well, it's up to you," he says. "This guy can be had for the askin', and if you don't grab him quick he's a cinch for the Giants. He can hit .325 all day long, and he plays that first sack like Paderwiski can play the piano."

"How did Jersey City come to tear themselves away from him?" I says.

"His old man's got a bank roll, I hear," says Joe, "and he took him outa baseball to start him in a honest livin' of some kind. I forget what the old man owns, for all I know it may be Central Park. Anyways, they have had a fallin' out and the kid wants to play ball again. I seen him hangin' around the hotel this mornin', and I can have him out here for practice to-morrow if you say so."

"Wait!" I says. "Has the U. S. army asked waivers on him?"

"Oh," says Heiland. "He got put in Class 12 or somethin' by them draft guys, on account of bein' physically unfit."

Oh, boy!

"You big stiff!" I hollers. "Are you tryin' to kid somebody? You wanna send me a first baseman which is crippled, hey? Another Hal Chase, hey? What is he—a armless wonder?"

"No, no!" he says. "He's in A-number-one shape. Just a little flat feet or the like. But on the level, that ain't slowed him up none, he's as fast as a telegram around first!"

"All right!" I says, after a minute. "Shoot him out to the park to-morrow, and if he ain't no good I'll betcha I'll dope out some way of finin' you fifty berries!"

Well, bright and early the next mornin', or in other words about eleven o'clock, Heiland comes over to the clubhouse with a tall, slim guy which hung his head and rubbed his cap around in his hands like he was washin' out a handkerchief. From the look on his face I figured he was gonna bust out cryin' at the first opportunity.

"This here's that guy I was tellin' you about," says Heiland to me. "His name's Manny Goldfish, but he bats under the name of Du Pont. Manny, this is Mister Mac."

At that, this guy looks like this is his chance to weep and he drops the cap on the floor. In pickin' it up, Red Higgins, which was comin' in, bumps into him and sends him sprawlin'. Manny gets up and apologizes to Red 'til Red got sick of hearin' it and beat it.

"I'm terrible glad to meet you Mister, now, Mac," says Manny, in a voice so low I gotta guess half of it. "And also, believe me, I'm sorry I should interrupt you when you're prob'ly no doubt busy."

With that he takes a step backward, like the chances are I'm gonna wallop him.

I give him a long, lingerin' look and I felt more like bustin' Heiland in the nose for bringin' this bird over. They didn't seem to be no more pep in him than they is in a plate of gelatine, and he acted like he figured he'd get murdered in cold blood if he opened his mouth at all. Imagine a guy like that on a big-league diamond in September, when they is more fightin' durin' a game than they is in France. Another Hal Chase— Oh, boy!

"In the first place," I says, "if you go to work for me you'll hit, run and field under the name of Goldfish, or whatever your real name is, and not no Du Pont or nothin' else! I ain't hirin' movie actors or chorus girls; what I'm lookin' for is ball players. You can't get no runs with a fancy name, because if you could I'd christen everybody on the club Ty Cobb and Baker, and go out and win all the pennants from here to Shanghai. In the second place, I don't wanna see no references, press notices and photographs in full uneyform while spearin' a hot liner, which the photographer paints into your glove at the studio. I will loan you a uneyform without a deposit for a hour and lead you forth to yon diamond. In that time if you got anything I'll no doubt see it, and if you ain't, kindly take the exit most

handy to you and *run*, not walk, to the street."

"Yes, sir, Mister, now, Mac," he whispers. "Thank you so many times!"

He starts for the lockers and they's a guy sittin' on the bench tyin' his shoes and blockin' the passage. Manny stops and stands waitin' patiently for said guy to get through with his shoes. He don't say a word and the other guy starts slowly lacin' up, stoppin' every now and then to admire his feet.

"Go on, go on!" I hollers at Manny. "Get past there and get dressed! We got a ball game on this afternoon."

Manny turns around and grins.

"Nu, Mister Mac," he says, waggin' his shoulders, "why should I go to work and make bother for this feller, which natural he's got to tie the shoes? I could wait and maybe—"

"You could wait?" I hollers. "I don't care nothin' about what you can do, I'm talkin' about *me*! I'll give you five minutes to get dressed and come out."

Manny looks scared and starts forward, immediately trippin' over the other guy's foot which had no more right in the aisle than I got in Congress. I looked for some action.

"Oop!" grunts the shoe tier. "Excuse me, feller!"

"Sssh—not a word!" says Manny, gettin' up off the floor and rubbin' his elbow. "I'm terrible sorry, I should have looked good where I'm going. I hope you didn't, now, hurt the foot, *nu?*"

He bends down and starts to pat the other guy's shoe, and I thought this bird would faint!

"Get in there, Stupid!" I bawls.

He fled in.

"He's a little odd that way," says Heiland, catchin' the look I give him. "You know, kinda shy and bashfullike. He don't believe in no arguments or scrappin'. I never knowed him to lose his temper once. Some guys is funny that way—I don't know."

"Well," I says, "all I gotta say is that that baby will have a rotten time with this club—if he makes it. These here rough-necks will break his heart, if not his head, the first time they get acquainted. He's nice and yellah too, ain't he?"

"No, it ain't that," says Heiland. "He

just don't seem addicted to gettin' mad, that's all. He wouldn't hit a gnat."

"I don't care nothin' about what he'd do to a gnat, Joe," I says. "If he can force himself to hit a baseball, I'll take his part myself with any gnats that gets fresh with him."

Well, out comes Manny on the field and walks with that look-out-for-the-eggs step of his over to where we was standin'. Bein' fairly well built in the places where it counts he looked pretty good in a uneyform, but then so does a chorus man. You can't tell how good anything is from simply lookin' at it. Take a lobster, for instance. The first time I seen one, I tried to step on it.

I put Manny over at first in the middle of the practice, and told him to go to it. Somebody hit a hot one to short, where Ellers made a circus stop and whipped the pill to first. The throw couldn't of been more perfect if rehearsed for a year, but Manny was prob'ly thinkin' what a crime it was to hit a innocent baseball and he fell all over himself and the bag, tryin' to stop the ball with his elbow. From the roll it took, the worst runner that ever left a base would of been on third anyways when Manny picked it up.

The rest of the gang starts holdin' their noses, and one guy asks has Chaplin give up the movies and got into baseball. Ellers is so mad he hurls his glove over at Manny, and Manny picks it up and walks all the way across the diamond to hand it back to him—with the usual apology.

I thought the gang would die of shock! "Oh, boy!" I says to Heiland. "If that guy is another Hal Chase, I'm a second Mary Pickford! I'll let him stay five more minutes—a laugh will do the boys good."

"That's all right!" says Heiland. "He'll make you and the rest of these guys like it in a minute. Anybody's liable to be a little bit off at the go in. Give the kid a chance." He hollers over to Manny: "Steady there, Manny. Show these babies some baseball. I'm with you!"

"Yes, sir, Mister Heiland," says Manny. "Thanks so many times. I'm terrible sorry I went to work and missed that ball. Especial I'm sorry on account of Mister Mac taking so much trouble for me. I hope you ain't gonna get, now, mad, are you Mister Mae? Please and don't, I wouldn't do it again. I'll give it my word. I'll—say, I'll give an apology to everybody—I'll—"

"Shut up!" I yells. "You'll have me doin' it. Play ball!"

"Yes, sir, Mister Mac, and thanks so many times," he says, and takes his cap off to me like I'm Wilson or the like.

Well, I said I'd give Manny a hour to show me. I had to break my word after watchin' him, because at the end of forty minutes he was tryin' out a fountain pen on the dotted line of a contract with my club. After that first boot, this guy's work was worth walkin' ten miles through snow and ice to see! At first base he was as good as the Liberty Loan, makin' all kinds of impossible stops and plays—and I'll tell the world that the bunch made 'em all tough—with the same ease you would remove a infant from confectionery. He went around the bags as if sent by cable, and at bat he made it one stop from the home plate and back again. He put two purposely wild pitches in left field and another over the center-field fence, and then I dragged him out. I didn't want to use this bird all up for the rest of his life in one day. Before he'll leave the plate he insists on deliberately fannin' so's Rickart, who was pitchin', wouldn't die of a broken heart. On the way to the clubhouse he stops and begs Rickart's pardon for hittin' 'em so hard, and Rickart tells him to go where the Huns come from. Some of the boys moved up expectin' a scrap, and Rickart dropped his glove and got set, not only willin', but anxious.

"That's all right, now, Mister Rickart," says Manny very soothin'. "I wouldn't blame you a bit. Usual, I ain't so lucky like to-day. I'm terrible sorry I went to work and hit all them balls on you, only natural I'm anxious I should make a, now, showing with Mister Mac. Go right ahead and curse and curse and curse! I wouldn't mind. I don't get mad so easy!"

With that he grins and walks away, leavin' Rickart dumfounded and the gang speechless for half a hour.

Well, nearly all the other clubs in the league got blowed to pieces by the draft before the season was over, on account of havin' most of their A-number-one ball players put in exactly that class by the exemption guys. This was tough on the Germans, but it broke nice for us because with the whole league ripped apart we had a royal chance to land in the money. You, me, or nobody else ever seen no baseball like this here club of mine put up in Sep-

tember, which is the time to show whether you're a ball club or a pinochle team. We busted up the Phillies' chances for the pennant, we made the Boston Braves look like semipro, and out of a dozen games with the Reds we win a even twelve. We had no more chance of winnin' the pennant ourselves than the kaiser has of gettin' elected a alderman in Paris, but we sure did keep the other clubs awake at night, and made a race outa the thing till the finish.

The sportin' writers went ravin' mad over Manny Goldfish, and they had nothin' on me. They wasn't a day that his picture didn't decorate the five-star editions, and he got more advertisin' than the Liberty Loan. Instead of callin' him a second Ty Cobb, they begin to say that *Cobb was a second Manny Goldfish!* We was drawin' bigger crowds than any club in the league and us not even in the first division, simply on account of this guy's playin'. They wasn't a game that he didn't pull off some stunt that give the fans somethin' to talk about for weeks after. Nobody give a Saratoga chip who win the game, they only wanted to see Manny Goldfish work. I could of sold him to any club in the league for more dough than the Red Cross got, but I would of just as soon auctioned off my left lung.

But they was one thing about Emanuel Goldfish that was past me. That was this here unhuman disposition of his. This guy would of made Job look like a chronic kicker, on the level! They was nothin' under the sun could make him mad, and he must of been the guy that invented the soft answer, also holdin' the patent on this turnin' the other cheek when smote stuff. His whole life was a world's series of apologies—excuse mes and I beg your pardons. If he bumped into you he apologized, if you bumped into him he apologized, if neither was the case he apologized anyways, so's to play it safe. No umpire livin' could get his goat, and for all he knowed a argument was a Hindu religion or the like.

We was windin' up the last series with the Cubs, and we needed every game we could get to land among the first four. The Cubs needed 'em too, because they had a chance for the pennant if they win the majority of the games left to play. The crowds that come out to the park was big enough to of took Berlin the first week if they all had guns, and every play was fought over like it was Belgium. Every man on both

clubs was ribbed up to scrap tooth and nail all through the series—every man but Manny Goldfish!

That bird wasn't human, I'll tell the world fair! Day in and day out, he was the same easy-goin', good-natured boob which wouldn't get sore if somebody put glue in his soup. In the last game with the Cubs, Manny comes up in the ninth with two runs on the bases and a hit needed to win the game. With two strikes and three balls on him, the umpire calls him out on a ball that was as far from the plate as Boston is from Denver. The gang went crazy and rushed in from the field to chew this umpire up. Even the Cub rooters is dazed at the decision and the guys which had bet on us was ravin' maniacs. Manny dropped his bat and swung around on the umpire, and I figured at last his fireproof temper was goin' by the board. I thought he'd at least kick this guy in the ribs, and we all stood by to give him a hand.

"Nu, Mister Umpire," he says, removin' his cap and pullin' that scared little grin of his. "Don't you think possible that last one was, now, a little wide from the plate, maybe?"

"Yer out!" snarls the umpire. "Don't gimme no back talk or I'll send you to the showers. Beat it!"

Manny straightens up. Aha! I thinks, here's where some excitement is gonna be had by said umpire.

"Let him have it on the chin!" hisses Joe Heiland in Manny's ear.

Manny turns around on Joe and wags his finger at him.

"Nu, Joe!" he says, "I'm terrible surprised for you! Why should I go to work and hit him—couldn't anybody, now, make a mistake? Maybe he did think the ball was A number one. He don't look like a crook. Anyhow, what's one out in my life? It wouldn't kill me, nu? Excuse me, Mister Umpire," he goes on, turnin' around. "Believe me, I'm terrible sorry I should give you a argument. It wouldn't happen again!"

With that he tips his hat and walks over to the bench. The gang all but swoons in each other's arms, and when the umpire come to he half emptied the water bucket before feelin' strong enough to go back to the plate again.

Manny sits on the bench with his head in his hands, lookin' like every friend he

had in the world had been torpedoed on the same boat. He was also makin' a moanin' noise with his throat.

"Cheer up!" I says, "I know that guy give you a rotten decision, but the game's tied up yet and you may get another slam at the pill before we go home."

"Gevhalt!" he says, lookin' up. "From the decision I ain't worryin' my head, y'understand? That's the least of it, and besides I think the umpire meant good. But to think I should go to work and almost lose my temper and holler at him maybe, right in front of everybody. Oy! What a lowlife I'm gettin' to be since I become a baseball. My father should hear me!"

"Aw, shut up!" I says in disgust. "You got everybody thinkin' you're yellah, as it is. What do you care about the umpire? He——"

"Oy!" he says. "You fellers ain't got no mercy. Look that poor feller which all day he's got to, now, stand back from the plate in the hot sun and watch if it's a ball *oder* a strike. He couldn't even run around for a change now and then, and them lowlifes in the bleachers does nothin' but insult him. And then on top of that, I have to make it worse for him. Oy!" he winds up. "Suppose I should get him a cigar maybe, d'ye think he'd excuse me?"

I would only of bounced him if I stayed there any longer, so I beat it.

The game goes eleven innin's, but Manny only went ten. In that frame, the Cub third baseman hit a roller to the box and starts for first like a frightened bullet. The pitcher scoops up the pill and shot it to Manny who smothered it with his glove just as the runner crashed into him, spikes first! They both went down in a heap with the ball rollin' out of Manny's hand from the smash-up. It was one of the rawest things I ever seen done in a ball park, and the crowd yelled murder. If the victim had of been any other player but Manny, they prob'ly would of been a murder staged at that, but Manny simply gets up on his feet, staggers around for a second and then helps this guy that spiked him to stand up. As we carried Manny off the field he was mumblin' somethin' about bein' "terrible sorry" and hopin' the other buy ain't hurt. At the hotel that night he claimed it was his own fault for blockin' the runner, which had a right to get to first any way he could on that hit.

Well, after that, I give this bird up, but the gang didn't. From then to the end of the season they stayed up nights thinkin' of things to make Manny's life worse than a German private's. They wasn't a day went by that they didn't pull off somethin' on him that was enough to make a blind mouse try and lick a bulldog. The more they done to him, the more meek and lowly he got, and that even temper of his which nothin' could change only acted with them like gasoline on a fire. They put live crabs in his bed at St. Looney and he thanked 'em in the clubhouse, but says he never could eat 'em. They put sand in his coffee and fixed it with the waiter so's he got near eggs for every breakfast at Cincinnati and he grins and says he wasn't hungry anyways. Coming in off the road, they lure him into a deliberately framed poker game and in a hour they had everything but his teeth. He didn't have nothin' left for them to play for and they had to quit, while Manny spends the rest of the day apologizin' for goin' broke and bustin' up the game. They mislaid his bats, burned holes in his uneyforms, hid his glove, poured water on his laundry, made him pay all kinds of dough for fake telegrams and called him to his face every name known to man or beast, tryin' to make him fight. They might as well of tried to fall in the ocean without touchin' water. They was nothin' doin'! Manny simply went around grinnin' that silly smile of his and apologizin' right and left.

In the clubhouse one day Red Higgins throwed a soakin' wet towel at Manny and it hit him right on a clean silk shirt with a whack that could of been heard at city hall. It must of stung like eighty-two bees and it certainly made a bum outa that shirt. The towel dropped to the floor and Manny slowly stooped and picked it up. We all waited with fond hopes that the worm would turn at last, the downtrodden would rise and smite the oppressor and the like. I think Manny would of even had some help if he'd started somethin', because they was many more popular guys with the club than Red.

Manny hesitated just a minute and we all held our breath, awaitin' the lightnin' to strike. But far be it from such! Back comes the old grin to Manny's face, simple and like a ox's. He walks over and presents the towel to Red, after first wringin' it out.

"Here's the towel," he says pleasantly. "I'm terrible sorry it got all dirty, on ac-

count from it fallin' on the floor. If only I knowed it's coming, y'understand, I would of ketched it."

Oh, boy!

"By the Eternal!" yells Red, snatchin' away the towel, "I didn't know they made 'em as yellah as you!"

"That ain't my natural color," says Manny, still grinnin'. "I got that from gettin', now, sunburned. You know some fellers turn red, while I get that tan color. Looks terrible, I know."

This here's more than I could take and I dragged him over in a corner.

"Look here, you big stiff!" I says. "Why don't you sail into that guy and bounce him? You're husky enough to take care of two like Red, and you'll make yourself solid for life with the rest of the gang if you go after him now! Ain't you got no self-respect at all? Go on and hit him once for luck, like as not he'll quit. Go on after him or the bunch will never let up on you! Are you gonna stand for a guy callin' you yellah right out loud in public?"

"Sssh!" he says, "I don't mind it, why should you? Red ain't the worst feller in the world, and we all should got to have some comical fun once in a while, *nu?* He don't mean no harm, he's just playful, y'understand, like a, now, *grosser* baby. Fun he's got to have. I should worry what any of the boys do, if I can give them a little joking, so much the better. It keeps lively the team and it don't cost me nothing. I should get mad!"

What could you do with a guy like that, hey?

"I suppose," I says, "if they got to cuttin' up for real and assassinated you or the like, you'd think they was only tryin' to be good fellers, hey?"

"Kill me, they wouldn't," he says. "None of them boys is bad at heart, y'understand? Still and all, if they would forget themselves, well we all got to die, ain't it?"

Wow!

When he went out, Joe Heiland stands lookin' after him for a minute and then he shakes his head and turns to the rest of us.

"I don't know," he says, "I may be wrong, but I think the dope is to let that baby alone from now on! Believe me, if he ever *does* get goin', they'll be Hades to pay around this clubhouse, I can feel it in my bones. He's a pretty good-sized husky at that, hard as nails, and he never got them

shoulders from eatin' chocolate nut sun-daes. Why——"

"Bunk!" butts in Shorty Mullins. "That guy ain't got nerve enough to steal a bread crumb from a crippled ant! If he was gonna do anything, he'd of done it long ago. He's just plain yellah, that's all. I seen a million like him—they come by the crate. What d'ye think he takes all that stuff for?"

"Search me!" says Joe. "He was the same way when he was with Jersey City. He told me once that when he was a kid he had got mad and slammed a pal of his, and if this guy hadn't come to in the coffin they would of buried him. Since then, he claims, he promised his old man he'd never raise a hand against no man, and it scared him so he's kept his word."

"He may hand you that stuff, but not me!" snorts Shorty. "They's only one trouble with him and that's the canary stripe he carries on his back."

Poor Shorty!

Well, we went along winnin' games till they was only one more left to play, and that was with Pittsburgh. If we win it, we finish third which puts us in the first division and gives every player on the team that works in the game, a bonus. It looked like a cinch, because we had beat the leaders with ease, and they was no good reason on paper why a troupe like the Pirates should give us any trouble. They was only one thing that worried me and that was the fact that the boys was lettin' down a little. The strain of that mad dash from the cellar to the first division in less than two months, trimmin' everything that crossed our path, was beginnin' to show. Then, again, it was practically all over for us with no world's series to shoot at, and they figured it was about time to forget the trainin' rules till next year.

They begin playin' stud, actin' like no game of poker could be really enjoyed unless played all night long. Some of them had dates with either a dame or a bartender every night, and all of 'em come out to the ball park lookin' like they just got up and playin' like they hadn't been to bed at all.

All but Manny Goldfish. He was on the job bright and early every day and in bed every night long before the autos lit up their headlights. He never touched nothin' wilder than milk and kept away from the ladies like they all had smallpox. Durin' them

last few days, Manny was about all the ball team I had.

I tried every way on earth to make the rest of them guys behave, but it was too late in the season, and most of 'em figured they wouldn't be no ball teams the next year on account of the mix-up in Europe. They got worse every day, and fin'ly some of 'em couldn't even remember where the ball park was located after a large night with the cracked ice. I posted up a warnin' in the clubhouse which said that anybody which was late for the Pittsburgh game would be fined two hundred bucks and wouldn't get a thin dime of the bonus money if we copped the thing. They all swore on the city directory that they'd be in there tryin' for that last win, if it was the final thing they ever did on a diamond.

To make sure of havin' at least a battery on the job, I shut off the supply of dough the day before the game. Them guys had all been travelin' so fast that the majority of 'em didn't have a nickel where they could get at it, and they raised a awful moan. They was at least five of 'em which had little parties fixed up for that night, and they raved around the hotel like graduates from a lunatic foundry. First they offered me seventy-five for a loan of fifty and the like, and then they threatened me with things that would of made the last days of the Czar of Russia look soft if they had of did them, but I never give in a inch. I wouldn't of loaned 'em a dollar if they had of give me Tiffany for security.

Manny is sittin' in the lobby readin' the ads in the phone book and takin' everything in with his ears, which was certainly big enough. All of a sudden he gets up and goes over to where the bunch is plannin' to put a bomb under my bed or somethin' and I see him bust into the conversation. In a few minutes, five of these guys breaks away from the others and they all go out.

I remember I was a bit puzzled at the play, because these five guys had been ridin' Manny worse than anybody else all season, and this sudden pallin' together looked funny. I figured that havin' nothin' else to do they had framed another stunt up on him to kill time and I let it go at that, only hopin' they wouldn't kill him too.

About nine o'clock, Manny comes in alone and goes to bed. I couldn't swear to it, but I thought I heard him bust out laughin' as he come up the stairs.

We was supposed to start this game at two-thirty the next afternoon, which was Saturday, and at a quarter of two if they was anybody in North America wilder than me, they had him in a circus. The game's due to start in forty-five minutes and out of my entire ball club *they is only four regular players ready to put on unctions!* The others has disappeared from the face of the United States for all I know!

Well, I chased around like a freshly be-headed chicken, wirin' here and telephonin' there, but they was nothin' stirrin'. I had scouts cover the town with vacuum cleaners and all they got was tired. The fans is beginnin' to yell for a flash at their favorite players, and the umpires drops the information that if I don't have a ball club on the field at two-thirty they will present the game to Pittsburgh on a plate. That means no first division and therefore no bonus.

Oh, boy!

I have about decided to go ahead with four ball players and five guys which had never got further than bein' able to tell the ball from the bleachers, when I happen to think I seen Manny with them deserters the night before. I nailed him.

"Look here!" I says, "you was the last to see them guys. Where did you go with them last night?"

"*Gevhalt!*" he says, gettin' kinda pale.

"They didn't send no word yet?"

"No!" I says. "Where——"

He bangs himself on the chest and begins waggin' his head from one side to the other. "Oy!" he says, "I'll betcha it's because my father, now, closed up on account of *Shabas!*"

With that he keeps on rollin' his dome around and moanin' "Oy, yoy!" some more.

"What d'ye mean your father closed up?" I says, grabbin' him. "Who's this *Shabas* guy?"

"*Shabas* ain't no guy," he says. "*Shabas* is Saturday. Oy, they couldn't get out now till Sunday oder Monday, maybe. Oy!"

I begin to see a light.

"Where are them guys?" I hollers. "Why can't they get out? Speak up quick!"

"They couldn't get out on account of my father which he's very, now, strict 'nd wouldn't do no business on *Shabas!*" he moans. "And natural——"

I run him back of the grand stand in a corner.

"Stop that stuff about *Shabus* and your old man!" I says, "before I go nutty too! Tell me this thing from beginnin' to end and tell it straight, or I'll murder you!"

"Oy!" he says. "Better I should be murdered! Them five fellers is locked in the back of my father's store and they couldn't get out till somebody comes with the tickets."

"What tickets?" I hollers.

"The pawn tickets!" he says. "I got them here by me, but I was to wait till they sent word. Oy! Them fellers will——"

I grabbed the tickets out of his hand. They was five of 'em all right and on each one was this:

"One ball player, \$50.00 with interest at 3 per cent. Not responsible for loss by breakage, fire, burglary or moths. No goods sent C. O. D."

"My father is, now, terrible strict about that last part," says Manny. "So they couldn't get out till——"

"What did them guys hock?" I butts in, kinda dazed.

"*Themselves!*" says Manny.

Oh, boy!

"Listen, Manny!" I says. "I know *one* of us is nutty—go ahead and talk till I see which one it is."

"Better I should tell from the first," he says. "Honest, Mister Mac, I didn't mean no wrong by nobody. Them fellers, now, they didn't have no money, y'understand, and they wanted some terrible bad on account they have with five girls a date which they're goin' to the theater, maybe cabarets and like that. I thought I could help them out by my father which he keeps a, now, pawnshop, y'understand, so I go to work and take them over to him. But when we get there, them lowlif—them fellers, excuse me, Mister Mac, they ain't got nothing which my father would take a chance and loan them even a dime on. I felt terrible sorry for them, so I fixed it up with my father he should let each of them have fifty dollars on *themselves* and make out tickets for them like a watch *oder* a ring, y'understand. Then they could go out and have it a good time, only when it's over they should come back and sit in the pawnshop like goods till you come over and got them out!"

"And if I didn't get them out they'd sit there forever, hey?" I says.

"That I wouldn't wish them," says Manny. "But I knew you would, now, get

them out because if not you wouldn't be able to have a ball team which it could play Pittsburgh!"

"How did you ever get them guys to come back after they went out with your old man's dough?" I says while we're climbin' into a auto bound for the pawnshop.

"Say!" says Manny, "my father ain't crazy. He made all them fellers sign notes that they owe twice what they got and which is good as gold because he could collect it from their wages. If they don't come back they got to pay double, *nu?* Believe me, them fellers was glad enough to come back and tear up them notes!"

Well, I brought five ravin' maniacs back to the ball park and throwed 'em into unctions in time to trim Pittsburgh after eleven innin's of the wildest baseball I ever seen. That's the small part of the afternoon's events. We was dressin' in the clubhouse when Manny come in.

"Let him alone!" I says, jumpin' in front of five would-be murderers. "You guys get what was comin' to you. I'll just take that fifty out of each of your envelopes and fifty more for showin' up late."

"And a dollar and a half each, besides!" grins Manny.

"What for?" they yell.

"Interest!" says Manny. "You don't think my father is, now, keeping it a pawnshop for his health, do you?"

"Why you big tramp!" roars Red Higgins. "I wouldn't give your old man a nickel. That's all you guys ever think of—money!"

"Yeh!" snarls Shorty Mullins. "The old man's a ball player too, eh? Ball four, take your base—ball three, take your watch!"

I didn't know what it was, on the level. It couldn't of just been the money, because Manny give the Red Cross a hundred bucks without a murmur. But believe me, it was *somethin'!*

"Say!" says Manny in a different voice than he ever used before, "fooling, that's one thing—business, that's another! You fellers wouldn't pay my father that dollar and a half, now, interest?"

"No!" they all bellered.

Sam! Biff! Whang! Zowie! Crash!

Five ball players hit the ground on their ears like a troupe of them Japanese tumblers!

"And besides," pants Manny, "while I'm working at the job, I might as well teach *all*

you lowlifes that you can't make a fool out of my father and cheat him out of no dollar and a half!"

With that he sails into the rest of 'em which is standin' there speechless, and all but the fast runners joined the gang on the floor. I never seen such hard and straight hittin' in all my life. On the level, it was somethin' pretty to watch!

When the last guy had resigned and flopped over a chair, Manny sits down on the bench and puttin' his battered hands around his head, begins to *weep*!

"Cheer up, Manny!" I says, standin' at a safe distance and patten' his shoulders. "Don't waste no tears over them guys. They had it all comin' and should of got it long ago. Why——"

"From them lowlifes I ain't cryin'," he says, lookin' up. "Only look what I took from them all season, when I could have done this here at any minute!"

Danny Geer, which knowed nothin' of what had happened, walked in right then. Still weepin', Manny gets up and without a word knocks him cold!



THE LUCK OF OTIS SKINNER

ONLY a very few people know that Otis Skinner was saved from bankruptcy at the beginning of his starring career by a lucky "hunch" at a faro table. Mr. Skinner himself does not know it. His manager and business partner, Joseph Buckley, found the finances of the firm at low ebb one week in New Orleans, two seasons before the consummation of the famous three-cornered theatrical arrangement that made Skinner a Charles Frohman star and Buckley his personal representative.

A season of Shakespearean repertoire had proved decidedly uncertain, and the crash came in the Louisiana city. When the box-office statements were checked up on Saturday night, Buckley found that his share of the profits were just a little better than fifty dollars. The amount was not sufficient to defray the star's hotel expenses, and far from the sum required to purchase railroad transportation to Mobile, the next "stand."

Impelled by the theory that a company manager might just as well have no money as the pitifully small supply of cash in his possession, Buckley transferred himself and his tiny capital to Bud Reno's gambling house, at that time a notable institution in New Orleans. The situation was so desperate that he decided to forget all rules and precepts and play "hunches" until he had enough money to get out of town or lose what he possessed. Searching his brain for an appropriately wild plan, he suddenly recalled the fact that the play acted that night by Mr. Skinner was "Hamlet," and that the King of Denmark, although his evil plottings are successful at the beginning of the story, finally loses his crown and life. The bare suggestion was sufficient. Buckley determined to "copper the king."

He put twenty-five dollars, half of his capital, on the king coppered, played it three times, and each time the cards ran that way. At the end of the first deal three cards remained in the box, a king, a seven and a four. Buckley again coppered the king and called the turn, king-4. Luck held, and the fall of the last three cards added one hundred and twenty-five dollars to his capital.

He began the next deal with the king coppered, and, to the utter amazement of every inmate of the gambling house, his uncanny winning streak was maintained. The king lost eight times in succession and Buckley turned in his chips for a few dollars more than twelve hundred dollars. He hurried to the hotel safe with his earnings, the company moved to Mobile on the Sunday-morning train, and Mr. Skinner will learn for the first time when he reads this that Bud Reno's gambling house involuntarily backed his Shakespearean tour at a time when it seemed doomed to failure.

The Queen's Necklace

By H. de Vere Stacpoole

Author of "The Gold Trail," "In His Place," Etc.

Like everything that Stacpoole does, this yarn is unique and original, and takes us all the way from the ultra-civilized Paris to the primitive jungles of the Amazon

JUST before the war I was in Paris, and, happening to be in the Rue de la Paix, I called on my friend Leverrier. He was a jeweler in a large way of business, but to-day is temporarily serving as cook somewhere in the Argonne until such time as he can be a jeweler again.

I met him first in Biarritz seven or eight years ago, and we at once became friends, for our tastes were sympathetic, and it was often a wonder to me that a man who loved an out-of-door life and all that goes with it in the form of movement and adventures could live cooped up in the Rue de la Paix, year in, year out, with little relaxation and no change to speak of.

That day I called upon him I happened to mention this fact. We were seated in the office at the back of his shop and there in the midst of ledgers and papers and an atmosphere prosaic as the atmosphere of a bank he told me this story.

"Well," said he, "it may seem a trifle dull, this life of mine, but I assure you there are moments in the life of a jeweler when he gets all the excitement and action he requires, especially when his stock is worth a couple of million francs, with a couple of thousand jewel thieves in Paris; men, moreover, who have made a fine art of their business. I could tell you a good many stories to prove my point, but I will content myself with one, just to show you that the word business covers more things than profit and money changing. It was my first adventure in life, all my future turned on it and in a most curious way.

"My father was a small jeweler in Marseilles. He died when I was twenty-one years of age. I was an only child, my mother had passed away some years before, and I was alone in the world. I had big ideas. I saw quite clearly that a small business is eternal labor and little profit, and

that if I wished to live a full life I must strike out, take my fortune and my courage in both hands, and risk everything to gain everything.

"I collected all my available cash, some sixty thousand francs, and, still continuing in business with the aid of one assistant, I crouched waiting to spring on Fortune should she come in sight.

"She came.

"Just at that time occurred the sale of the Polignac jewels. I attended it. On the second morning of the sale and just before the luncheon hour a necklace of opals was put up, the most lovely work of art, fire opals, some of large size, and set with small brilliants; but it was less the value of the stones that attracted me than the workmanship of the whole. You may guess my surprise when the bidding started at only fifteen thousand francs and the three succeeding bids only raised it to eighteen thousand. But the fact of the matter was that opals just then were out of favor. There is nothing more curious than the fashions that come and go in precious stones, diamonds always excepted. Opals are, as you know, considered unlucky, and just then there had been a murder case or a divorce case or something of that nature in which opals had figured, so I suppose the grande dames of Paris and London were not buying; at all events, the big dealers present were absolutely unenthusiastic. Then I came in, and the sight of a young and enthusiastic bidder seemed to hearten the others, for they put the price up on me till twenty-eight thousand francs was reached. At thirty thousand francs the hammer fell and the necklace was mine.

"Now, only a week before the sale I had read in a paper—the *Echo de Paris*, no less—that the Queen of Spain had a passion for opals, and it was that paragraph in my head,

no less than the beauty of the article at auction, that had made me keen on the purchase. I had, in fact, resolved that, if I could buy it, I would endeavor, by hook or by crook, to sell it to her majesty, not so much for the profit as for the sale, for let me tell you that the fortune of a jeweler lies often at the back door of a palace, if he can once slip in, and that the history of the Rue de la Paix is, in part, the history of the Tuileries during the Second Empire, and the histories of the courts of London, Vienna and Berlin.

"Well, I had my necklace at the cost of half my available capital, and it only remained with me now to make the sale. I wrote to the chamberlain of the Spanish court stating the facts and got no reply to my very civil letter though I waited a month. Then I cast about me for other ways to forward my scheme, but without success, and several Spaniards whom I knew, so far from encouraging me, gave me to understand that of all courts in the world the court of Spain is the most exclusive and the most difficult to manipulate.

"Well, there I was with my hands tied and my necklace round my throat, so to speak, and my thirty thousand francs lying unproductive. Many people would have given the thing up, but I am very tenacious by nature. Once I get hold of a plan I stick to it like one of those dogs you English keep for setting upon bulls and, in fact, I would not be defeated.

"It occurred to me, suddenly, to apply to our deputy, Monsieur Villenois, a black-bearded southerner, a man from Tarbes, who might have stood for the portrait of Daudet's *Numa Roumestan*. I interviewed him, and he listened to my story with interest. He became enthusiastic as though it were an affair of his own.

"The Queen of Spain is now at Biarritz," said he. "Go there, my dear Monsieur Leverrier, with your necklace and wait. I will obtain a letter of introduction from our foreign minister and forward it to you at your hotel." He refused to be thanked, all but embraced me, dismissed me with the highest hopes—and forgot me. He was not a scoundrel, simply a man who could not refuse; one of those genial southern souls, all sunlight, and to whom a promise signifies nothing.

"Well, I put up at an hotel in Biarritz and I saw her majesty often at a great dis-

tance, but I did not see the promised letter from my deputy.

"There were some pleasant people in the hotel and among them there was an old gentleman, Don Pedro Gommera, with whom I struck up a close acquaintanceship. He was, as it afterward turned out, the owner of a rubber estate on the Amazon, a man very wealthy, but of the type of the old buccaneers. It was this in him, perhaps, that pleased me; he was different from others, and in our conversations he talked of the wilderness of the Amazon, of his life there; of the rubber workers who, though paid, were practically his slaves; and in such a manner that I seemed listening to the voice of Cortez himself.

"Bold spirits attract one another, and one day, still waiting for my deputy's letter, I told him of my intended attack on her majesty of Spain and of the necklace. It interested him and he asked to see it, as he was a connoisseur of jewels, and I unfortunately, or rather fortunately, acceded to his request.

"I kept the casket containing the thing in a tin box, and the tin box in my valise, and my valise in my bedroom. We went up to my room and there, opening the valise, I produced the necklace with which he at once fell in love. He was completely fascinated, just as a man is fascinated by a beautiful woman, and I could tell without any word of his, but just by the manner in which he held it and hung over it, the effect it had produced on his mind. But he said nothing much till that night after dinner when he approached me in the smoking room where I was smoking a cigar.

"He sat down beside me, and after talking for a while on various subjects he came to the point.

"I have been thinking of that necklace you showed me," said he, "and if you will excuse me for talking to you on business, I should like to purchase it."

"Ah, monsieur," I replied, "nothing would give me greater pleasure than to do business with you, but, unfortunately, it is not for sale, or only to one person—and her name you know."

"I would point out to you, monsieur," said he, "that when I take a thing into my head money to me is no object. Name your price."

"And I would point out to you, monsieur," I replied, "that when I take a thing

into my head money is no object. I wish to sell this article to her majesty, not so much for the sake of the money she will pay me as for the sake of a business introduction to the court. I hope yet to be jeweler to the court of Spain; yet, leaving all that aside, there is the fact that I have set before myself an object to be attained, and I have never yet desisted once I have started on a journey toward an object.'

"'You are an obstinate man,' said he.

"'No, monsieur, a tenacious one,' I replied, 'and as that is not a bad description of your own character, if my instinct for physiognomy is not at fault, you can sympathize with me.'

"'You refuse to sell?'

"'Absolutely, monsieur.

"'Very well,' said he, 'let us say no more on the matter.'

"He left Biarritz next day, and the day following going to my portmanteau I found it unlocked. I opened it, and found the tin box containing my treasure gone.

"It was like a blow in the stomach.

"I had left the portmanteau locked, of course. That was what I told myself. Then doubt assailed me. Had I omitted to lock it in putting back the necklace, and had Don Gommera noticed the fact? That he was the thief was a fact of which I had an instinctive surety, based on the instinctive knowledge that nothing at all would stop this man from attempting to obtain any object upon which he had set his mind. As I knelt holding the lid of the portmanteau open and looking at the contents something drew my eye. It was an envelope, an ordinary envelope with the name of the hotel on the back, bulky but unsealed. I took out the contents and found notes on the Bank of France for the sum of forty thousand francs. Not a word, not a line, just the notes in an unsealed envelope.

"Despite my rage and mortification, I could have laughed. There was something so childlike and primitive in the whole business, so rascally and yet so ingenuous. I seemed to see before me more fully the character of the man—a man who dared all the risks of burglary, a man who did not hesitate to steal, yet a man who disdained taking a jeweler's goods without paying for them. He would have cut my throat, perhaps, to obtain what he craved for—yet have left the payment in notes on my person.

"The thought of applying to the police occurred to me; but I dismissed it. First of all, he was no common criminal, he was an hidalgo, but not of our day, and I had that much fine feeling that the thought of dragging him and his white beard and his noble manner into the dirt of a common police court was repugnant to me. He had treated me as an equal, and I did not see myself standing before him as the figure of a prosecuting tradesman.

"Secondly, he had robbed me not of a necklace, but of an object in view. He had gained his object, I had lost, for a time, mine. No, it was a question of man to man, not of jeweler and thief.

"I packed my portmanteau and started back for Marseilles, and the day after my arrival I called upon Chardin.

"You may not have heard of Chardin. He is the inquiry agent employed by all the great business houses of Marseilles; his office is in the Rue Noailles and he has sub-agencies everywhere. Give him a week and he will tell you all things about any man from the name of his dentist to the number of his shoes. In less than a week Chardin placed before me all I wanted to know, the exact address of my man and how to reach it. Also, Chardin told me that Don Pedro Gommera had departed for home by the last boat, and that if I took the next boat, which started in eight days' time, I would arrive on his heels. So far, so good, but what an address that was! The Estate of Flores, on the left bank of the river Amazon, and a thousand miles from its mouth, enough to daunt any man as it did me for the space of a day and a half.

"For a day and a half I held off, but I was young, my will was strong, and that something which makes for adventure was in me.

"'Will you let distance beat you?' I asked of myself, and the answer came on the question, 'No.' There was also something else, I do not know what, something like the tide which leads men along to fortune, and whose ripples men sometimes hear by a finer sense than that which brings us the sound of the dinner gong. I felt that I was doing the right thing—and then, again, beyond that, I felt that if I allowed this old man's will the victory I would start in life handicapped by the sense of defeat and the knowledge that another man's will was stronger than mine. So I packed my traps,

I left my business with my assistant, and started.

"*Ma foi*, that wonderful journey! it burns still in my mind like a blue jewel, first the ocean that seemed to turn to a deeper indigo each day, and then the vast river and the tropical forests that hide its banks. I took passage up it in a Royal Mail steamer, a great white boat that seemed built for deep-sea service, but none too big for the Amazon where the *Mauretania* herself might navigate even a thousand miles from the mouth.

"And the forests forever and forever lining the banks, and the birds flying above the forests—birds that yelped like dogs and birds of all colors from snow to flame. It seemed a strange place for a man to come in search of a lost necklace!

"The Flores plantation where I had arranged to be put off was well known to the captain and officers of the ship, also Don Pedro Gommera who seemed to be a character. They had many stories about him, of his wealth and the number of tons of rubber Flores put out each year, and so forth. Hearing I was going on a visit to him, they declared that I would be treated royally, and so I hoped, but I had my doubts. I only wanted to be treated fairly, to receive back my necklace and, if possible, the expenses of my journey.

"Once in our conversations at Biarritz the old man had said that some day I must pay him a visit on his estate. I determined in my mind to take that cue, to be absolutely courteous, and to win my necklace back with a laugh, so to say—Well, man proposes and God disposes, as you shall hear.

"At breakfast one morning the captain told me that I had better get my belongings together as in the course of an hour or so we would be off Flores, and at eleven o'clock, standing on the deck with my belongings beside me, the plantation came into view with golden fields and native houses and a great wharf like a deep sea harbor wharf alongside of which we came and tied up.

"The stoppage was made not entirely on my account, for there was some cargo to be discharged at the plantation. I watched the wharf-side crowd of colored men as I waited for the gangplank to be lowered, and as I watched, there, sure enough, came a figure through the crowd, the figure of a tall old man clad in white wearing a Panama

and smoking a cigar. The crowd parted before him as he came, just as the Red Sea parted before Moses. It was Don Pedro Gommera.

"Was he surprised when, stepping from the gangway, I saluted him, bag in hand? I don't know. I can only say he showed nothing of surprise, and when I told him I had come to pay my promised visit he seemed charmed, called porters to collect my luggage and then, having boarded the steamer for a moment to speak to the captain about the cargo consigned to him, came off again, apologizing for the delay, inquiring as to whether I had had a pleasant journey, and all with such an air of having expected me, such warmth, such courtliness, that confusion seized me as much as it could seize a jeweler with a grievance, a tradesman who had been wronged and had come over four thousand miles to have his wrongs redressed. But, not for long. As he led me off toward a large, low, white house set beyond tree ferns and surrounded with a miraculous garden, where palmists waved against the sky and butterflies like blossoms chased each other over flowers more brilliant and lovely than jewels, I became myself again, or, rather, I became that self which contact with the personality of my courtly host engendered in me, for it is perfectly true that one takes one's color from one's companions, and that a man of true stateliness and good form diffuses his qualities as a lamp diffuses its light or a flower its perfume.

"You may laugh to hear me talk so of Don Pedro Gommera—ah, well, if you had met him, you would know exactly what I mean, and if you had met him in his home on the banks of the Amazon you would know even better.

"The house where he led me was verandahed so that nearly every room on its two floors gave upon a veranda space, it was shadowed by vast trees and surrounded by a tropical garden—a garden where one might lose oneself in broad daylight—a garden where one came upon marble seats set in coigns of shadow and before vistas of tree-fern alleys and views, now giving one the picture of the forest's heart, and now of the broadly flowing Amazon.

"The house itself was furnished with the simplicity that is born of warm climates and, when I had been shown to my room by a manservant, I returned to the veranda where

I had left my host. There, while we sat in rocking-chairs and talked, another servant made his appearance bearing a large silver tray on which was a bowl of crushed ice, glasses, decanters containing rum, liqueurs and lime juice, cigars and cigarettes.

"The tray, having been placed on a table beside us, we helped ourselves to its contents and the conversation turned to my voyage and far-away Europe.

"It is difficult," said Don Pedro, 'for European people to understand the life out here, simply, monsieur, because the life out here is so different from the life of Europe. There civilization holds sway and the old laws of the different countries, being the products of centuries of experience and practice, work of their own accord, so to speak, smoothly and meeting every requirement that may turn up. The crimes are all tabulated and the punishments. It is like the contents of a shop. If a man wishes to invest in murder, let us say, he knows the price he may be expected to pay, but here I am the Law, and on this estate justice is my caprice. For, if a man were to murder another, his punishment would lie entirely in my hands, and I might hang him or shoot him or imprison him in a dungeon or let him off, as my fancy chose."

"You are, in fact, king," said I.

"I am, in fact, king—absolutely."

"I am just a tradesman," I went on, 'and though I may have been intended for higher things than the life of cities, fate has placed me where I am.'

"He laughed.

"Do not run down tradesmen," said he. 'They were the first adventurers. I myself am a tradesman of a sort since I sell the rubber for which I pay my laborers. To me, men are men and the worth of a man is to me everything, his position in life nothing. I am so placed that I can look on things like that, unblinded by the false views that make up civilization.'

"Just then a voice, clear, golden, sweet as the voice of a bird, full as the voice of a woman, came to us from the trees; the rear foliage shook, parted, and disclosed the form of a girl, the most lovely, wild, entrancing vision that ever fell on the sight of mortal man.

"Lightly attired as a Greek of old days, almost barbaric, with raven hair moist as though from a bath in some lagoon of the river, and red gold bangles upon her perfect

arms, she stood with hands spread out in astonishment at the sight of a stranger.

"Around her neck and resting on her snow-white bosom adding a last touch to the strangeness of the picture, lay a string of blazing opals.

"My necklace.

"You can fancy the situation.

"My daughter," said the old man quietly, and then to the vision: 'Juanita.'

"She came toward him and they spoke together in Spanish. He introduced us with a few words as she hung beside him gazing at me with the eyes of a forest creature, eyes luminous and deep and dark, friendly—yet destructive to peace of mind.

"Then she vanished into the house.

"Then he turned to me.

"Monsieur," said he, 'you are a connoisseur in gems, what do you think of my daughter's necklace?'

"Señor," replied I, 'I did not see the necklace you speak of. I saw nothing but the beauty of the Queen of Flores.'

"He bowed. As for me, I almost spoke the truth for I was in love.

"As for the necklace, it was never spoken of again during my stay at Flores. It had reached the destination I had designed for it. It was worn by a queen. It is still worn by a queen—my wife."

"Ah, you married, then——"

"We married. At first, the King of Flores refused the idea of such a union, not on account of my position so much as of the fact that he did not want to lose her. But she prevailed. She brought with her a dot of a million francs, and when I declared my intention of carrying on the only business I knew and my conviction that no man ought to live on his wife's money, he agreed.

"Go forward," he said, 'but do big things, start in Paris, and for a beginning I will lend you what money you want at an interest of five per cent.' So I came to the Rue de la Paix.

"You see, he was a great man. So much above the littleness of life that he saw no discredit in the word shop. So great that he did not hesitate to buy by force the object he wanted, or to hand over to me through reason the object he wished to keep.

"Civilization would have called him a brigand, but civilization could not have understood this man of a larger and simpler day."

Big Bill, the Salmon Trout

By E. Albert Apple

Author of "The Silver Fox," Etc.

You would hardly think that a salmon could become involved in a murder mystery, but here are the incontrovertible circumstances. Apart from that extraordinary episode in his life, Big Bill is as interesting an individual as we have encountered lately

THE lone clew that solved the mystery of the murder of Happy Hawkins, fifty-fifty owner of the Dalton Cache Gold Mines, originally was a black speck so minute as to be invisible to the naked eye.

The black speck was the only discoloration on a cream-colored ball the size of a pin head which had tumbled, by the law of gravity, under a quartz pebble on a gravel bar forty feet below the surface of the southern end of Lake Ogaki, Northern Ontario.

In time, by the psychic force that produces stars from nebulae and Moccasin Orchids from the carcass of a rotting skunk, the black speck grew. The icy, cleansing waters from an underground river, which fed the lake, gushed forth over the gravel bar and scoured at the surface of the cream-colored ball until, in its swelling, it burst and the black spot came to life as a baby salmon trout.

He grew rapidly. The cream-colored ball supplied him with nourishment until he was able to swim. Then, with thousands of other baby salmon, he turned his head to the underground river, opened his mouth and fed on tiny bits of insects and vegetable protoid carried into his delicate throat by the swift current.

A few days more, and the trout were able to swim feebly in schools, hugging the extreme shallows where the cannibalistic gray mullets, large-mouthed black bass and doré could not follow them. They darted about inquisitively, fleeing in terror at the faintest movement of the shore growth. Because it is easier to hunt in groups instead of in multitudes, they broke into schools of about three thousand each.

The salmon evolved from the tiny black speck destined as key of the Dalton Cache mystery was, from the very start, the leader

of his school. Later he was to be the kingpin of the lake and still later the absolute despot and terror of all connecting lakes on the great Muskalogan chain. He was no different than the others—they were as alike as pieces of metal stamped from the dies of a punch press. Their weight was uniform, their length identical; they had the same number of teeth, the same hunger, the same fears. Joy, passion, sex, the fighting spirit of the game fish, were as yet books with uncut leaves and even unopened covers to them. Life was new, puzzling, strange; they functioned entirely by instinct. And so, by instinct, the Dalton Cache salmon swam as leader; and, by instinct, the others followed.

The first few weeks, they could swim only about five feet without pausing to recuperate—easy game for the prowling, ravenous feeders farther out, so nature told them to keep to the shallows. But gradually a flip of the tail and vigorous wabble of the fins carried them farther and farther. Slowly they ventured forth, but always close to shore, scurrying back at the approach of the dark forms lying in wait.

Soon they were exploring thirty feet out—forty—fifty—and the slower-moving babies were gulped and digested as nature weeded out the unfit. The school decreased from thousands into hundreds and at length into scores. The survivors took a farewell tour with their leader, then disbanded, swam away. The power of the will had manifested itself; no longer did they function entirely by instinct. Each set forth on his own path of exploration—some to end in the gullet of a larger fish, others to mature and grow mighty through the years until the mysteries of a camouflaged hook proved irresistible.

The leader had hard battles to fight. Every member of every other genus of game

fish not only watched but sought for him, for he had no sharp, stiff needles on his fins and was easy to swallow. One and all, he eluded them. At the end of the first year he weighed three-quarters of a pound.

He was a creature of prey himself now—darting at chubs and all other soft-finned minnows except his own type, nosing under rocks for crawfish, swooping to the surface and snapping up insects. He grew swiftly for three years, attaining a weight of two and a half pounds. After that, his growth was slow—no one knew just how long, though scientists estimated it into the decades.

Finally, the salmon trout was a creature of twenty-eight pounds, an underwater monster before whom all other fish fled in terror. He no longer cared for newly hatched minnows—his appetite was too ravenous; he sought after meals at least six inches long. This trout was a demon. Once he set his mind on a victim, there was no escape. He would follow—follow—could outswim anything with fins. Sometimes he lay in wait in still pools under rock ledges or old tree trunks that had collapsed into the water, darting out and securing his food in a twinkling when it drifted lazily past. At other times he swam deep, where his victims could not follow, his black eyes on the alert for overhead traffic. A plunge upward, a half turn of the body and click! his peg teeth crunched from below into throat or belly.

Times countless he had been hooked by fishermen. But always he got away. Usually he could snap the hooks off by his backward lunge. If the hooks did not break, he sprang ahead faster than the fisher could pull in his heavily weighted deep-water trolling line, got a foot or so of slack and bit the line in two with a side motion of his lower jaw. Then, the troll hanging from his mouth, he would seek a jagged rock and begin to fight, lashing and tossing his head until the hook caught and snapped; it was easy to work the rest loose. If this failed, the hook festered out. Whereupon, free again, bleeding and maddened, the huge game fish would set forth on a rage to kill others.

In time this salmon trout became known as Big Bill. His fame spread through the North Woods and into distant parts. Men took long tramps, even came from the far-off States, in the hope of getting a tussle

with him in Lake Ogaki or one of the others of the Muskalogan chain through which he roamed. Big John Canadian, Iroquois chief from Caughnawaga and only man who ever shot the Lachine Rapids in a canoe, almost landed him one trip. Big Bill hauled John's canoe for a mile; then John, fearful of breaking his new green line—which was tested for only fifty pounds—relaxed for a moment. That moment was enough. Big Bill got his desired foot of slack, plunged upward—and John lost his best troll.

It took Big Bill three days to rid himself of this new instrument of the devil—he had been sure it was a chub—and then he shot to the surface, turned a beautiful horse-shoe flip in mid-air, splashed back and, fuming, raced for something with which to fight. The water fairly boiled as he flopped; the ripples billowed out in circles for a hundred feet. Two men, trolling in a cedar canoe far over to the left along a cliff shore, looked up quickly.

"Gad!" said one of them. "That must have been Big Bill. Paddle over that way."

Big Bill saw their canoe passing far overhead. He shot down to the bottom of the lake—seven hundred feet deep—then swam along swiftly to the south end, rose over the gravel bed and entered the torrent-rushing underground river.

Through the dusk of pickerel twilight on an autumn evening, a dusk accentuated by the permeating, eye-smarting smoke from a forest fire in the distance, came two roving mining prospectors and camped for the night on the southern shore of Lake Ogaki. They set to work with hand axes, made black-birch poles for a pup tent and covered the sides with a chunk of tattered, dirty canvas from their packs.

The fat member of the team, Happy Hawkins, flipped bacon in a tin skillet and sang in a hoarse voice the Yukon classic ending:

"And the woman's name was Lou."

He puffed and wheezed as he concentrated between bacon and Lou, but that did not affect the song much. Happy sang all songs to the same tune. His partner—stubby, suspicious, a chronic sneer balanced at the corners of his brown lips—sat on a rotting log, leaned toward the fire and squinted. He was chewing tobacco and knitting a pair of gray socks. Happy Hawkins caught the picture and roared.

"Haw-haw!" he jubilated. "Some combination—knitting needles and a sparrow's nest of natural leaf. That makes it nice!"

"Huh! Hustle up! I'm hungry an' tired. Sure as my name's Prayer-book Johnson, I've walked from hell to breakfast this day. We're a punk pack o' miners, we are. If you'd let me stayed around that Shining Tree District, like I wanted to, we'd had gold ore a heap. I feel like going out and gnawing down a tree. Happy, you're takin' on fat so you look like the jack o' clubs."

"That makes it bad!"

Happy prodded the bacon with his pointed green stick and gave it a deft turn. Then his singsong started up again:

"And the woman's name was Lou."

"You got Lou on the brain. Sing that one about the shooting of Soapy Smith."

Before Hawkins had time to shift gears the flat, dead air was shattered by a thumping splash, then a crackling and a swishing thump as a great tree near by fell into the lake. Happy, always curious, interested in the faintest manifestation of action, laid his skillet aside and strolled over. A root of a great beech, originally creeping into a frost crack in the shore rock, had—in its slow but dogged growing—expanded the crack until a slab of quartz as large as a horse had broken off and fallen into the water, the tree following.

"Prayer Book!" yelled Happy tremulously. "Come here—quick! Look where the rock broke off. Do you see what I see?"

The eyes of Prayer-book Johnson bulged. He leaned forward and caressed the quartz with calloused, stubby fingers.

"Gold!" he breathed raspingly. "A gold lead! Mother alive, look at it! Why, you could pick the free gold out with a knife. Ribbons three inches wide, splashed all through. It must be a whale of a vein."

"That makes it fine!"

They tore into their sample sacks, brought out hammer and gouges and set to work. Supper grew cold and the fire faded. The ore ran up to within four inches of the surface. Before night bunched in upon them, they had uncovered the vein.

"Eight feet wide!" roared Prayer-book Johnson, slapping Hawkins on the back.

They leaned weakly against trees, staring absently into each other's eyes. Then, like exploding powder, they came to life,

seized hands and danced about like school children.

"Prayer Book, we're rich! We'll hunt the owner of this strip—oughta get it for a song. Man, we're millionaires!"

"You found it."

"That don't count," declared Happy, shaking his head generously. "We're fifty-fifty on everything, you'n'me."

"Happy!"

"Yes!"

"What say, put it in writing—draw up a contract?"

"Surest thing! Not that we don't trust each other, but just as a matter of business."

"You draw it up, Happy. You got the ed-jucation an' I ain't."

"Sure! I read lots of law papers in my days."

By the light of the camp fire, Happy slowly spelled out the document, scrawling it laboriously, with trembling fingers, on the inside of an opened-up pasteboard breakfast-food box left behind by some campers. He toiled with a stubby indelible pencil. Prayer-book Johnson leaned excitedly over Happy's shoulder, his eyes glittering, making suggestions.

"I wisht I could write, Happy."

"One writer's enough for any family."

"I know, but it's a great knack—like ticklin' a piano or bakin' soy beans in maple sirup."

"But you can *knit your own socks* and I can't."

"Yes, and you can *write* but I can't. It's a great knack. Don't shake your head that-a-way. You oughta take pride in it—not be modest just 'cause you can do it. I wisht I could write, I do! I sure wish it. It's a gift, that's what it is. Read what you got wrote there, Happy."

Happy, with a delivery that indicated a fall from a higher social plane, read the strange contract aloud:

This document drawn up by Happy Hawkins and Prayer-book Johnson, placer miners and ore workers from the Yukon and Porcupine. Said Happy Hawkins and Prayer-book Johnson have known each other for three years, during which never a night but they slept same bunk or blanket or next door. Happy sets forth that Prayer Book is the kind of man that'll do to cross the plains with. And Prayer Book attesteth that Happy is all wool and a yard wide and herewith as at all times past has fifty-fifty rights to said Prayer Book's food and dynamite caches, whatsoever.

The aforementioned parties, having bed, fed and traveled in double harness clean down through the Northwest territories, now find, on Lake Ogaki, at the southern end, where this is written, a gold lead of great promise at the site of a fallen beech tree that knocked off a ton slab of quartz when it plopped into the lake. Wherefore, since everything has always been fifty-fifty between these two parties, be it grub, ammunition, whisky, or cash, the said parties here-with enter into the following agreement:

That, though Happy Hawkins has right of discovery to the mine, which is hereby named the Dalton Cache Gold Mines, in memory of a camp on the border of B. C. and lower Alaska where Happy won a bet of the only pipeful left, by drinking Prayer Book under the table, be it understood that both parties do make agreement and set thereunto their name and mark, that each doth have from this date forever after a full and unrestricted half interest in said gold mine.

And be it further agreed that since Prayer-book Johnson sayeth that if he was snowed up in a cabin for six months he'd rather have Hawkins with him than any one he knows, and since Hawkins has no one in the line of inheritance heir except a scamp of a nephew and he don't count, it is agreed that in event of either party to this agreement dying by causes natural or artificial, deceased's interest and ownership goeth without stint to survivor. If they both die simultaneous, the profits of the mine shall accrue to some professor outfit for the purpose of finding out how a ptarmigan changes its feather from partridge gray to white when the snow sets in, whether northern lights are caused by electricity or the reflection of sunlight from the glaciers, and other worthy scientific investigation.

Nothing is to be read into this agreement by any law sharp to make it mean something it don't. And this agreement and covenant lasts till Rockefeller gives away gasoline and snow falls black, and said agreement is from this signature on enforceable by the rifles or other implements of either contracting party.

(Signed)

HAPPY HAWKINS

PRAYER-BOOK JOHNSON (P. B. J.—X).

"Gosh, that's fine!" indorsed Prayer Book admiringly. "You're sure the educated person!"

They built up the fire till the blaze roared higher than their heads, got out a pint of cheap whisky and pledged their faith. Then Happy Hawkins rendered his entire repertoire of songs that could be sung to one tune, and Prayer-book Johnson listened respectfully, applauding loudly between rounds.

The afternoon of that same day, Big Bill returned to Lake Ogaki from a trip down the Muskalogan chain. It had been a long tour—forty miles in all, but he knew the under-water route thoroughly and had no

difficulty finding his way. Like all salmon trout, Bill had the most wonderful eyesight of any living creature—fully a hundred times as powerful as a man. So vivid was his power of vision that his memory was in his eyes—they photographed every stone, sand bar, gravel bed, sunken log and field of alga under-water weeds he passed over. One glance at them and he remembered where he was.

It had been a dull, eventless day and he craved stimulant. Nothing of interest had happened except when Big Bill spied a wild duck riding the waves. He shot up, snapped an orange leg, hauled the duck under water and drowned it. Then he tried to eat it, but the feathers and thick down choked his mouth and he gave up in disgust. He came up along the rock shore; the lakes were an average depth of two hundred feet and built like boxes, dropping down abruptly in most places at the water's edge. Bill swam vigorously ahead, close to the surface, for it had been a cloudy day and there was no hot sun to force him to the depths. Then, too, autumn was at hand and the upper waters were cooling. Smaller fish—mainly bass and pickerel—shrank aside timidly, but Big Bill picked on the weak only when he needed food. He showed his disdain of the small fry by a violent swish of his tail, which was Bill's way of shrugging his shoulder.

He felt jubilant, cocky, quivered with the game spirit and kept his beady eyes open for a doré large enough to put up an interesting fight, for the spawning season was at hand and Big Bill was soon to be papa to thousands of young trout. But no doré showed up. He knew he could find them lurking in the shadows and pits, but he was too impatient to wait. Up in Lake Ogaki, there were a lot of lady trout. Yes, and waiting for him. He knew they would select Ogaki, because a shallow creek led into it, and when good trout die they surely waken in an endless creek with falls to climb and gravel bottom and swift current to run against.

There was one trout in particular. Ah-h-h! My, but she was a beauty. Big Bill had mated with her in the spring. The top of her head and neck were the color of black pearls and her body flashed with silver and gold dust. A black pencil line ran along each side, from gills to tail. Bill had a black line just like it—he had seen it when he turned; but he was not so sure about the

back of his neck being jet—he had never been able to see it, though he had often tried when he leaped out of the water, somersaulted in the air and landed on his back to take up the shock and protect his white belly.

He had nosed his ladylove and pronounced her the finest wife he had had for eleven years. She was different from the other trout. Bill was sure she was no ordinary salmon. More probably a silver soho breed.

Now, when Bill reached the creek outlet of Lake Ogaki, he ran onto something that he could not remember, for his eyes had never photographed it before. A family of nine beavers had come by night and built a dam. They had started it with water-logged branches, which cannot rise and float away, built it up with a basket weave of flexible branches obtained from treetops after gnawing through the trunks, finally stuffing the openings with leaves and mud. Then they had gone upstream a short distance and pawed at the creek bed until the sand and gravel had plastered the dam with a fortress coating.

Farther on in the lake, they had built a house of similar construction on the bank. The purpose of the dam was to raise the water of the lake so that the opening to their two-story house would be under water and other animals could not follow when the beavers dived and entered through the tunnel.

The water had risen swiftly and was pouring over the dam in a waterfall that made Bill's heart jump. He leaped out, hooked his tail into the falling water, worked it as a lever, threw himself higher—one flip, and he was over the top.

He swam on. His ladylove awaited at the mouth of the creek. Together they went happily down the lake, swimming side by side, now and again rubbing together with joy.

A few inches in the lead, Bill led the way. He followed the shore until he came to what he was looking for—the beaver house. Big Bill had a grand inspiration. He would show off, to impress his sweetheart. Accordingly, he swam to the tunnel opening where a beaver guard slept with his tail in the water so that if the dam broke he would know at once that the water was falling and could rush the family to the dam for repairs.

Bill took a sly nip at the guard's tail and hurried away much pleased at the consternation that broke out within the house. And now his wife's eyes sparkled with admiration for his originality and daring.

In the course of their swing around the lake, they passed over the bar and rose to the surface, under the twilight, attracted by the camp fire of Happy Hawkins and Prayer-book Johnson.

Big Bill had the awe for fire common to all primitive life. Often he had ridden the lake surface on still nights, wondering at the gorgeous playing of the aurora borealis over the whole northern half of the sky: moon coronas, the dancers of leaping pink and green, the long rocking searchlights, streamers, floating balls and the greatest of all northern lights—the sheet, a yard-wide band of white slicing the heavens from due east to due west.

Once there had been a forest fire and great glowing chips fell in the water and hissed; Bill had fled in terror to the underground river, the first time he had ever experienced genuine fear. He had seen camp fires at rare intervals, and occasionally the blaze of pitch knots where men were fishing by night. Even the stars held him spell-bound. Anything with light—fire.

But as Big Bill peered alertly at the camp fire on the low cliff along shore, the fire lost its fascination; for he heard voices—some one singing about Lou and another shouting his ribald approval. That meant men, and Bill felt uneasy, for his life had taught him that where men are, there also is trouble and treachery, surprise and danger, and, above all, death. He scurried to the depths in a panic, his pretty mate with him—also fearful but trusting and confident that as long as Big Bill led the way, everything would be all right.

"I got what I went after!"

Happy Hawkins made the announcement impressively.

"You bought this land—got a deed to it?"

Happy nodded.

"For a song—hundred an acre for shore frontage, five an acre back of that. Eighty acres in all. Total of two thousand three hundred iron men."

"Good enough! And I got the cabin well under way while you was gone."

"That makes it nice."

"And I've stripped the vein, off an' on fer

three hundred feet. The quartz shows up green, back from shore. Happy, I tell you, I went through Klondike and Porcupine and Colorado, too, for that matter, in my day, an' I never see anything like it. We're rich as chocolate cake."

"That makes it nice."

"The liquor's give out, though, an' it's against the law, so I hear, to even ship it in from Quebec."

Hawkins breathed a dismal sigh.

"That makes it bad," he declared sadly.

"Well, maybe it's all for the best. I got a feeling we ought to have our heads about us now."

Prayer-book Johnson shot a keen glance toward his partner. He did not believe in mind reading, but Happy's words came as a curious echo to a thought that had been keeping him awake and tossing of nights, a thought that harmonized very well with the wailing of the loons, the sad funeral sighing among the hemlocks and the screaming of a lynx stalking its prey.

"Fall's here," Happy suggested. "The tourists have all gone home. Their cottages are boarded up for the winter, every one of them. We're alone, nobody to bother us, but somehow I feel uncomfortable. Ever get that-a-way, pard—like you was afraid of something, you didn't know what?—We must be the only folks for miles and miles, but we better guard our ore close. Up here a man could steal and be safe as snow lice on the lake with an ice shove all around them and no birds near. Yes, and even murder."

"Phew! You're as cheerful as a corpse. Come out of the dumps. Sing me about Lou."

Next day they followed the lake shore eight miles, entered a village, bought two canoes, blankets, plenty of ammunition, salt, some kitchen tools and the like, and returned to camp. The mining got well under way at once. They sank a shaft, ran an open cut from the shore cliff, and began their drifting. The vein widened out into a twelve-foot fissure as they reached a depth of sixty feet.

Big Bill, the salmon trout, had been expecting the strangers to leave with the customary promptness of campers. Still they remained, and Bill grew uneasy. Finally it was too late to seek another lake.

There was only one gravel bar in the lake—that near the camp. Elsewhere the

shores dropped off abruptly to gigantic depths. Bill still felt safe, though; the gravel bar lay under forty feet of water. No man could follow them that deep; some one might send down enticing lures and drag them past, but Bill knew them all by sight—from spoons and silver soldiers to copper wabblers and spinning otter baits. Besides that, trout never feed when they are spawning.

Big Bill remained to guard the eggs. And now that the spawning was over, he was obsessed with ravenous hunger. That made him attack even more fiercely the prowlers who came to devour the eggs. Bill gorged on fish. He killed every robber that approached, killed with as much ferocity and exultant glee after his hunger was appeased as before. Their dead bodies floated to the surface and the bell divers and black-billed wild ducks swooped down and carried them away. No muskelunge showed up to give Bill the joy of a real battle, for they are rarely found in Canadian waters that drain south.

Then, one early evening, came a curious visitor. It was no fish. Big Bill hesitated. Still, it was unlike any troll lure he had ever encountered. The eggs must be protected at all costs. He lunged viciously and shot up from beneath, turning belly up like a shark, and clutched the intruder's tail.

A cruel barbed hook landed securely in his lower jaw.

Two hours later, MacCallum, the game warden, who had that morning torn out the beaver dam with much cursing, again entered Lake Ogaki in his motor boat and spied an empty canoe in the distance, slowly riding the light head waves. He jerked the steering rope and approached the boat, stopping his engine some distance away and drifting in until he could clutch the side of the canoe.

Hunched forward within, collapsed over the prow, was the body of a man—later identified as Happy Hawkins, fifty-fifty owner of the Dalton Cache Gold Mines. He was dead, his skull crushed in at the base of the brain by a violent blow such as might be administered by a rifle-barrel. It was clearly a case of murder—and murder by whomsoever had sat behind him and handled the paddle at the stern. There was no visible evidence.

The warden, who had come to think of crime as limited to fishing with a light,

spearing out of season, bringing down ducks with a rifle instead of shotgun or shooting more than one deer per head in a season, felt as confused as an old woman. He knew who the murdered man was, however—had seen him alive an hour before—so he took the canoe in tow and headed his motor boat toward the mining camp.

The rest of the story, including Big Bill's service as a clew, came to light in the courtroom at Nolan Sound, where Mr. Justice Anbury, riding circuit, had come up from Toronto to hear the case at the October assizes.

Mr. Justice Anbury banged his gavel till the judge's rickety bench threatened to collapse. The justice grasped the structure quickly to steady it.

"Order!" he droned belligerently, but rapping more softly. "Less talking and no more tobacco spitting or I'll clear the court. Now"—glancing to the witness stand—"proceed with your testimony, Mr. Game Warden."

Warden: As I was saying, may it please the court, at close onto six o'clock of the evening of October 4th, I docked my motor boat at the wharf of the Dalton Cache Gold Mines.

King's Counsel: Whom did you encounter there?

Warden: A man who introduced himself as Happy Hawkins and another man, the prisoner, who gave his name as Prayer-book Johnson.

King's Counsel: Did you notice anything peculiar or suspicious in the actions of Mr. Prayer-book—

Barrister for Defense: Object!

The court: Objection overruled.

Warden: No—and yes.

King's Counsel: What do you mean by that? Explain yourself.

Warden: Well, the prisoner struck me as a man who must have looked peculiar and suspicious since he was born.

Approving and indorsing cries of "Hear! hear!"

Barrister for Defense: Object!

The Court: Objection sustained. Witness' opinion irrelevant. Strike it out of the records. Proceed!

Warden: I stayed and talked about twenty minutes. Hawkins took us into their cabin. He wanted to show me some samples of ore.

King's Counsel: Did you notice anything that caught your eye—on the wall?

Warden: Yes!—a fishing troll.

King's Counsel: Describe that troll.

Warden: It was a hook on a wire leader. About two inches above the hook, there was a knot in the wire to keep the spinner from slipping down. The spinner was made out of the bowl of an old pewter spoon. It was much the same as Ojibway Indians use a good ways farther north.

King's Counsel: Could you identify that spoon?

Warden: Yes.

King's Counsel: On oath?

Warden: Yes.

King's Counsel: How?

Warden: It had the initials P. B. J. scratched on the inside of the spoon bowl. The prisoner told me it was his troll, that the initials were his and that he scratched them himself. I remember distinctly his boasting about the lettering. Hawkins explained to me, going down to the dock, that Prayer-book Johnson could neither read nor write, he could only make his initials—and was mighty proud of them.

King's Counsel: What happened then?

Warden: I left and went down the lake, through the creek. About an hour later, I thought I'd slip back to see if by any chance the miners were netting or spearing, that being against the law in the salmon spawning season, and part of my official duties. Then I run onto the canoe and found the dead man—

King's Counsel: You have already testified and been cross-examined on the details of that. How did the prisoner behave when you brought him the body of his murdered partner? What were his actions like?

Warden: Took the news stolidly, as an outdoor man who'd led a hard life naturally would. Few minutes later, seemed to lose his head. Got excited and began to curse and vow he'd track the murderer to the front gates of hell.

King's Counsel: Did you spend the night at the mining camp?

Warden: Yes.

King's Counsel: Anybody else there?

Warden: Just me and the prisoner. They'd been working the claim alone—didn't have nobody helping.

King's Counsel: Did the prisoner seem at all hysterical?

Warden: Yes, he kept asking me over

and over, as if he forgot he'd just asked the same thing a few minutes before, 'Do you sing? Can you sing about Lou? *Happy* was always singing about Lou. Oh, God! It's lonesome. I'm afraid.'

King's Counsel: To what did you attribute his hysterical condition?

Warden: Well, it was liquor. I sometimes have a flask on my hip—just in case of cold, of course.

Cries of "Heart! heart!"

The Court: Order!

King's Counsel: Did the prisoner talk in his sleep that night?

Warden: Yes, something about black snow and Rockefeller giving away gasoline.

King's Counsel: That was from the contract between the two men, by which, if either died from causes natural or violent, his half interest in the mines went to his partner. We will produce that will. Witness, observe closely. Have you seen this fishing troll before?

Witness examines troll, turns it over and over, puts on steel-rimmed spectacles to inspect more closely.

Warden: Yes. This is the troll belonging to the prisoner, the one that was on the wall of the cabin when I last saw *Happy Hawkins* alive.

King's Counsel: Was the troll on the wall when you brought the body back?

Warden: No. I'm sure of that. While *Prayer-book Johnson* was getting supper, I looked over his tackle—he had a whole clutter of it—and wondered what he'd done with this here one.

King's Counsel: Tell the court and the jury, how this troll afterward came into your possession.

Warden: It was two days later. Early in the morning. I was down to the village of *Larkspur*, just below *Lake Ogaki*. I run into an *Iroquois Indian* from *Lower Canada*. He was asking me about the game laws and *Indians'* privileges in *Ontario*. He said he'd heard about *Big Bill*.

The Court: Who is this person—*Big Bill*?

Warden: *Big Bill* is a famous salmon trout in these parts—mighty famous.

The Court: Oh—just a fish!

Warden: *Just a fish?* Well, nobody ever been able to land him, though he's been on a half-hundred lines off and on for years. There's some as thinks he's just a ghost. I don't. This *Indian* I'm telling about said he'd never yet seen the trout he couldn't

get. He said, where nothing else will land them, a mouse will. He had a whale of a big hook to bait it on—thought he'd try surface casting—and some live field mice in a baking-powder can with holes punched in it for air. I asked him, would he take me along in his canoe? He said, sure. So I went.

Counsel for Defense: A game warden, fishing in the closed season?

Cries of "Heart! heart!"

Warden: Yes, sir, and sorry enough I am, sir, but I know the department will overlook it when they know what the trip led to. The *Indian* got *Big Bill* on a strike right off the reel. We hadn't been out more'n twenty minutes. He put up an awful fight—hailed our canoe for an hour, but we finally got him into the boat. He weighed twenty-eight pounds.

King's Counsel: What did you find hanging from his jaw?

Warden: This troll belonging to *Prayer-book Johnson*!

Here followed cross-examination, which failed to budge the warden's testimony an iota.

King's Counsel: Gentlemen of the jury, we know that this troll—*Exhibit A*—was the property of the prisoner at the bar. We further know that it was hanging on the cabin wall an hour before the murder. Still further, we have proven that the troll was missing from the wall two hours after the murder. If it had been stolen by a third party, the defendant would have known of the theft, for he has sworn under oath that he never left the one-room cabin for an instant between the time when, as he claims, the murdered man left to go trolling alone and the time when his body was brought home by the warden, an accredited officer of the law. Furthermore, the warden swears that he found this trolling line—*Exhibit B*—in the canoe with the murdered man. You will note that the troll has been torn from the line, evidently by a fish, and that the line at the point of cleavage is frayed—three of the five strands broken in one place and the other two about an inch farther out. You will also observe that the strands of cord attached to this troll, as taken from the mouth of *Big Bill*, exactly fit the broken strands of the original line. Gentlemen, the case is complete. The motive has been established, along with evidence so circumstantial as to be almost direct. It was

Prayer-book Johnson who trolled from the stern of the canoe while Happy Hawkins paddled in the prow. It was Johnson who treacherously struck him down from the rear by a blow from a rifle barrel—and then, in terror at his deed, undoubtedly, abandoned the canoe, leaped overboard, swam to shore, made his way home through the bush and changed his clothes. I charge you to find the prisoner, Prayer-book Johnson, guilty of the murder of his partner, Happy Hawkins, for the purpose of acquiring complete ownership of the Dalton Cache Gold Mines, as per their mutual agreement.

An oath, guttural, sullen, burst from the prisoner. He jumped to his feet and menacingly shook his handcuffed arms at the warden.

"Damn you!" he shouted passionately. "If it wasn't for you breaking the law yourself, I'd gotten away with it."

Three Dominion policemen quickly forced him back into his chair.

"My dear warden," confided Mr. Justice Anbury later, when he had pronounced sentence of death, "I will cause to be stricken from the records of the case, the incident of your violating the game laws of the Province. You have rendered justice a great service and you need have no fear of your appointment being canceled. By the way, I'd like to have a look at this Big Bill—if you have kept the body on ice. If possible, if it is not too late, and if you would humor me, I should value the body, to have mounted in Toronto as a highly interesting memento of a peculiar case."

"Your honor," hesitated the warden—and then confessed humanly: "Jinks, sir! As soon as I saw the troll, I knew what it meant. And he was such a handsome devil, that salmon, I just couldn't resist taking a pair of nippers and removing both hooks and tossing him back into the lake. You ought to have seen how fast he darted away. The Indian liked to have brained me, but I made it right with him for fifty cents. Sir, why don't you come up next season and bring some good tackle and make a try for Big Bill yourself?"

But the judge shook his head.

"No," he declared with quiet emphasis, "Big Bill's earned his immunity. We'll leave him alone. I'm glad he's free again. And if anybody ever lands him, I hope it's out of season and you catch him and I sit on the case!"

The underground river still rushes into Lake Ogaki and over the gravel bed where Big Bill entered the world as a tiny black speck on a cream-colored ball the size of a pin head. Big Bill still mates in the spring, always with the choicest and daintiest female salmon the great Muskalogan chain can yield. He still explores seven hundred feet deep, fights the large pickerel for pure sport, skims the surface with his top fin showing like a periscope.

On shore and in the distance men toil, go to war, brood over petty nothings, captive in collars and shoes and regular hours, living the prisoner life of civilization, a life they fret under but cannot escape. Big Bill sees them occasionally—usually on hot days when his restlessness drives him to the surface for a leap out of water and a swift retreat to the cool depths. It is an enviable haunt for warm weather—that glassy-clear water, cool, sweet, refreshing, invigorating. Free! Free! Free!—happy and unworring, because he lives as nature wants him to, does as he pleases and not as others say he must do. He rings no time clocks, he adds no figures; shaving and draft numbers and good behavior do not bother him.

I saw him an hour after sunset, when the whippoorwills were calling and the loons wailing and the porcupines back in the woods crying into the dusk. The northern lights were rocking in the distance, gorgeous shafts of pink, crimson, white and green. Big Bill rose to the surface like a cannon-ball, leaped completely out of water, turned a beautiful backward horseshoe somersault. The ripples swept out in great circles for a hundred feet as he plunged back into the depths. I had fished three hours, with nary a strike; but the game warden chanced along and told me this story, so I moved on to another chain of lakes, for fear I might catch him and destroy that which I would be above all else, had I the choice.



On Hate and Water

By Theodore Seixas Solomons

Author of "Snow-Blind," Etc.

How hate and hunger may develop a puling hypochondriac into an upstanding man of health and purpose is demonstrated by the author in this outdoor yarn. Just reading about it is a tonic

CHAPTER I.

THE HYPOCHONDRIAC.

THE consultation took place on the side porch of the Hazeltines' favorite country place. At least it was the favorite of Mrs. Hazeltine, for her son Harold had no favorites—among country homes or anything else. Doctor Stein had been beckoned to the porch as soon as his car crunched the gravel of the main driveway. He was very solemnly greeted by Mrs. Hazeltine, a small, thin woman, and somewhat soberly by pretty Madge Loring.

"Why doesn't he come, Carter?" asked the elder woman of a slim, worried-looking manservant who just then emerged from a glass door. He was perspiring.

"Coming, ma'am, as soon as I've placed his wide, flat-armed easy-chair."

The ponderous invalid chair was disclosed in the entryway back of the door. Carter leaped lightly over it and then pushed it out upon the porch and into the thin shadows of the climbing vines, which were just leafing out.

"Oh, dear," wailed Mrs. Hazeltine, "I wish that boy didn't have such an aversion to sunlight. I'm sure it would do him good. Tell him Doctor Stein has arrived—mention it casually," she added to Carter, who threw a kind of shawl over the back of the chair and reentered the house.

"Now, doctor, do be discreet, won't you?" begged the anxious mother. "You know Harold is so perverse, poor boy, that any too-emphatic advice is bound to irritate him, and——"

She was interrupted by the appearance of the poor boy himself, a pale young giant of twenty-two, of scrupulous grooming and melancholy, blasé air, who nodded to the women and languidly permitted the doctor

to shake his hand before he dropped into the chair. Capacious as the chair was, he quite filled it, for he was flabbily stout. He met the solicitude of his mother, the friendly looking over of the physician and the carefully noncommittal air of his Cousin Madge with an effect of patient toleration.

"Now, darling," began his mother, seating herself on the arm of his chair and putting her hand caressingly about his shoulders, "please do take Doctor Stein seriously and consider all that he says to you. Madge, please don't go away. I'm sure Harold considers you quite one of the family by now, and you're so sensible for a young girl that Harold, I know——" At which Harold raised a feeble hand.

"Please, mother, spare me all needless preambles. Certainly, Madge may stay." He smiled at the healthy, blooming young woman who, however, was looking out into the bright May morning, disporting itself in a thousand sunny pranks upon the lawns and gardens.

He would have been an exceedingly personable young man if he had not been a gelatinous invalid. Nature had given him shoulders, and an excellent neck and head, and fine, gray eyes. And Providence, moreover, had bequeathed him the Hazeltine fortunes, which his all-too-dynamic father had vastly augmented prior to his accidental death nine years before. But Providence is a many-faceted deity and a mere glance at mother and son—such a glance as Madge Loring now threw furtively in their direction—would have left one uncertain as to which was to be pitied the more.

"Now, my dear fellow," Stein was saying, "as I have told you repeatedly, every examination has failed to disclose any weakness in you that could fairly be termed organic. There are none of your many ailments that could not be functional derange-

ments, very profound and obstinate, perhaps, yet removable. Even the distressing digestive conditions"—Doctor Stein brought his finger tips together in a manner of nice diagnostic discrimination—"might well be the result of your—um—possibly indiscreet diet in conjunction with an almost total lack of physical activity."

Young Hazeltine held up a perfectly manicured hand. "My good doctor, I am certain I have explained on several occasions that I have a distinct aversion to activity. It fatigues me excessively."

"But, dearie—" urged his mother.

"One at a time, dear mater," begged Harold with raised eyebrows and a light sigh.

"Nevertheless," resumed the physician with a trace of asperity, "this anæmic condition, if we may so term it, is not the sort of thing which should be allowed to progress year after year. It is fraught with certain perils—"

"Oh, doctor," pleaded Mrs. Hazeltine, "please don't put it in that way."

"I merely mean—"

"Oh, say what you mean, if you wish," interrupted Harold. "I assure you I am no weakling—in a moral sense, at least. My condition has brought me face to face with the realities of life; yes, and of death, too, I assure you. Now for Heaven's sake, mother—"

Mrs. Hazeltine had suddenly risen and turned away.

"Oh, auntie, you just go in," said Madge. "You are nervous, dear. Please! It won't do any good to stay and talk. Let me represent you—do! There." And she half led, half dragged the perturbed little woman from the porch. When she returned it seemed to her that Stein was visibly relieved. Various and delicate are the tasks of the family physician.

"Now look here, Harold," he said briskly, "you've had all the doctors you're willing to talk to. I've been glad of that. And no man of standing among them has ever made a diagnosis that is really inconsistent with my idea of your case. Great Scott, boy, you worry your mother to death. Buck up and do something!"

Harold smiled his polite—and weary—smile.

"It's fate, doctor, intricate patterns of fate; the warp and weft of heredity. In my days and nights of bodily inaction I have at least exercised my mind. I have read, as

you probably know, profoundly. Don't forget the Mendelian law of dominants and recessives, doctor. I'm a recessive—that's all!"

Madge had unconsciously clasped her hands at the quiet eloquence of the palely handsome youth. But when Harold renounced the dominant and claimed the recessive, instinctively her fingers stiffened and she exclaimed spiritedly:

"Fiddlesticks!"

She was only a second cousin of Harold's departed sire, but apparently she had secured some of the latter's "dominant" strain. Harold threw a not unamiable glance at his dissentient relative and resumed:

"But get it off your mind, doctor, whatever the new gruel is that you and the mater have cooked up for me. To oblige you both I'll do it, you know; that is, if it's not too oppressive."

"It need not be, even from the first," replied Doctor Stein, plunging to his task. "It'll be exhilarating—stimulating—possibly just what you need. It's simply to live in the open air—go camping—on a journey."

Harold leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes and groaned.

"My boy, it's the thing! These beach resorts and mountain resorts have failed because you always carried your armchairs with you. Air alone is not enough, nor change of climate; you ought to be on the move. Now let us arrange it for you—" The doctor warmed to his work:

"A good horse for you to ride—plenty of comforts carried along—very slowly at first, you know—easy stages—rest as you need to, or choose to—all that sort of thing. Now, please, Harold, for your mother's sake; for your own sake—"

He paused as Harold arose and looked wistfully at Madge.

"Oh, very well, then," decided the young giant lazily. "For all your sakes. But spare me the details, my dear Doctor Stein—the bugs and worms and sunburn and cold water. Talk it over with the others." And he slouched despondently into the house.

CHAPTER II.

THE QUARREL.

"I say, Dalton, suppose we call it a day?"

Harold rode behind the guide and four pack mules straggled along behind Harold, their sleek, dark bodies protruding fore and aft from bulky packs covered with canvas

that had been whiter when the little cavalcade left the Canadian frontier town of Russell some two weeks before. They had fairly entered the heart of the northwestern wilderness.

"Poor feed hereabouts," observed Dalton, and he looked at his watch. It was three o'clock of a bright June afternoon.

"Good enough," returned Harold, "and I'm tired; so here we stop."

Without further protest, Billy Dalton turned off the trail into the bare, rocky creek bottom, dismounted, jerking loose the coiled halter rope of his horse, walked around Hazeltine, dexterously caught and tied the lead mule and began to unpack.

His employer did not at once dismount, but gazed with listless, unseeing eyes at the serrated sky line of timber on the far hillside. When finally he decided to get out of the way of the guide's unpacking, he swung wearily to the ground and without troubling even to unloosen his horse's girth cast himself comfortably on a wind-gathered mat of spruce needles and watched the labors of his thirty-dollar-a-week Man Friday.

Thirty or three hundred, it was all the same to Harold, as long as the fellow was his Man Friday. Madge or the doctor or his mother had got him—he didn't remember which, though he'd probably been told. His mother, however, had devoutly wished the man might prove "guide, philosopher and friend." Harold remembered that from the absurdity of it as applied to this uncouth person.

Very likely the absurdity of it had struck the uncouth person also. For while it was not difficult to be Harold's guide if you knew the long trails as this man seemed to know them, it was certainly as hard to be his friend as it was essential to be a philosopher in order to avoid quarreling with him. For the invalid, in spite of his general languor, his indifference to the beauties of the way, to the life or death that might chance upon the journey, was a most perniciously positive person upon any matter affecting his comfort or his whims, his indifference manifesting itself here only with regard to the comfort and welfare of the other members of the party—the two-legged and four-legged appendages, as it were, of the expedition.

Bill Dalton, as big as Hazeltine, somewhat older in years and very much older in experience, quiet, and pithily spoken, had many of the earmarks of the genial philos-

opher of the great outdoors. But the test of true philosophy is its staying powers, and each passing day of their outward bound had drawn more and more heavily upon the guide's reserve of patience and forbearance. Though he had doubtless been admonished to regard the youth as unfit, it was likely that Dalton had expected a certain amount of help from Hazeltine as soon as the latter should learn the rudiments of camp craft. But of assistance, even of the simplest and lightest, the guide had received none.

The outfit, due to Harold's insistence, was ridiculously bulky and hard to handle; the horses and mules required a good deal of attention—always the case during the first part of such an expedition; and the routine labors of camping and traveling when thrown upon one man, no matter how husky and expert he might be, were exceedingly arduous. But Harold rendered them doubly arduous. The six horses and mules, spirited though they were and requiring constant attention, at least ate and slept without assistance, but it was not so with the spiritless seventh animal in the care of Dalton. He required waiting on every moment he was not in the saddle. He must have been a new and strange creature to the frontiersman, and a maddening one.

Young Hazeltine was certainly an enigma. Ill health or underhealth or whatever it was that in a bodily sense ailed him could scarcely account for the monstrous total of his sluggishness and apathy. If his indifference to his youthful being, to his vivid surroundings, was a pose, at least he maintained it with a consistency rare among weaklings. And a like consistency—far less rare—governed him in his selfish indulgences. Blind or perverse to a truer selfishness which would have avoided those courses which were hurtful to him, he continued the process of self-destruction quite as assiduously in the healing woods as he had pursued it at home. His means of suicide was, of course, his appetite—the morbid appetite of the cultivated dyspeptic.

This afternoon Harold was particularly exasperating. The forage being poor, Dalton was obliged to tether one of the mules as well as Harold's horse, and all the animals had to be closely watched. This was a job that Harold could easily have taken upon himself, leaving the guide free to attend to the camp work. But he preferred to read a book on camp cookery and to mark

such recipes as captured his fancy. These he copied out and handed to the perspiring guide, or rather he compelled the guide to come and get them. "I say, Dalton!" he would drawl out lazily, and Dalton would walk over, a queer smile on his round, tanned face, take the paper, pocket it, and go back to slashing fir fronds for Harold's bed or laying out on the ponchos the innumerable articles—mostly useless—which Harold had caused to be lugged along. The man would no sooner return to these tasks from a flying trip to the famished, straying mules, than Harold would demand the instant production of his fatigue garments and his elaborate toilet paraphernalia. His demands were polite and gentlemanly requests, and if they were not instantly complied with they were repeated with aggrieved, exaggerated politeness, in a tone of injured gentility.

The toilet equipment produced, the young patrician of the north woods proceeded to his elaborate afternoon ablution, a process which seldom consumed less than an hour, while the harried guide fell to cutting wood, getting water, building the fire and preparing the inevitable beans; these and many incidental duties being thinly sandwiched between foot races after the discontented animals.

His self-attentions at the creek being ended for the time, Harold sauntered heavily into the camp and surveyed its arrangements with abysmal disfavor. He requested that his dunnage bag be removed from the greasy vicinity of the bacon. He reminded Dalton that he had neglected to set up the folding chair. And, finally, he suspected that any camp fire in *that* position would be bound to blow smoke at the only comfortable spot in which his chair and footstool could be placed.

Dalton, presumably with the most obedient of intentions, threw a bucket of quietus upon the fire, from which ashes immediately arose and a few flakes threatened the immaculate person of his employer, whose sigh and upraised face dumbly called Heaven to witness his martyrdom. And Billy started a new fire in another place, moved the whole outfit, and patiently resumed his cooking. Somewhere in his overalls pocket were Harold's copied recipes for prune shortcake, minced ham omelet—à la evaporated eggs—and canned corn fritters glacé. On the fire was a simple camp repast, but even this

was late—thanks to the cavortings of the bell mule and Harold.

The latter destroyer of time and amiability had several times looked up from his perusal of a small volume of "The Poetry of Pessimism" and cast a frowning glance in the direction of the drudge.

"My good man, I'm rather hungry," said Harold finally. "Can't you hasten that process?"

When Harold exercised his proprietorship it was always with a "my good man," though on occasions of extreme good nature he patronized the guide with a condescending "Billy."

"Coming up," said the "good man" patiently. But when the meal was served and Harold looked in vain for corn fritters glacé he dropped his knife and fork upon his plate with a clatter, folded his fat arms upon his large, plump chest and said with obvious restraint:

"My good man, I asked you to prepare three dishes for this meal. That is to say, I handed you three recipes, as I have done before. That, from *me*, is certainly equivalent to—I dislike to say it—a definite command to prepare them." And he bent upon his hired man a haughty stare of interrogation.

"I got you, all right," replied Dalton, ladling beans, "but I didn't have time. I'd have had to fuss with 'em for an hour or two, and we're late as it is."

"I noticed, though," pursued Harold, disdaining the beans, "that you fussed and fussed with those wretched mules. I dislike to suspect you of doing so on purpose to have an excuse for not complying with my wishes."

A sudden flush suffused the face of the guide. He opened his mouth as if to speak, but, instead, inserted beans. Harold continued to gaze at him angrily, but the guide paid no attention to the irate youth, keeping his weather eye upon the beasts. Twice he bolted from the camp to drive back a hungry wanderer.

"I wish to say," remarked Harold on Billy's second return, "that it's rather disgusting of you, you know, to mother those brutes the way you do and pay no attention to me and my needs."

Dalton scraped up the last bit of stewed apricot in his bowl, wiped his mouth with a large red bandanna, and turned to his employer.

"Say, young feller," he asked, "what do you think would become of us if those grazing animals strayed and the others broke loose and followed them?"

"I don't know, *young fellow*, and I don't care. I want supper, and a decent supper."

"You don't care," echoed the guide sneeringly, "and *you* want your supper." He mimicked Harold's querulous tones. "Well, *there's* your supper, and a durned good one at that. Take it or leave it. Those concoctions you dream of only make you sick, anyway."

Harold Hazeltine's heavy under jaw dropped down, but no words came from him. He was entirely unconscious of the fact that his mouth was open. All he knew was that never in his life had any one spoken to him in that way. Imagine it! Harold Hazeltine, heir to the boundless Hazeltine estates, was actually being talked at in this extraordinary fashion by an obscure and common person. The astounded young gentleman, commanding himself as best he could, finally articulated:

"Do you realize whom you are addressing in that insulting fashion?"

"Sure," replied Billy coolly, "I know exactly who I'm addressing and what."

"What?" repeated Harold, almost shrieking it.

"Yes, *what*. You're H. Hazeltine, that's who you are; the son of two others of the same name. I had just as many parents myself—Daltons. And you're a useless carcass taking up space on the earth where perfectly good grass might grow. That's *what* you are."

Something came to the wealthy invalid's rescue. He laughed raucously.

"Positively," he assured the spruce trees, "it is worth the annoyance of this silly trip to have had such an experience. Conceive of it!" And he laughed again.

"Say," said Dalton, pointing his finger at Harold, "you're funnier than the experience. I'll bet those mules think so, watching me feed you with a spoon and prance around whenever you raise that fat paw of yours for me to wait on you. Which do you suppose they're laughing at most—me or you?"

Harold had managed to light his habitual cigarette. His face had gone white, but somehow his jaw had tightened.

"We don't pay you thirty dollars a week to air your opinion of us, my good man, either impudently or even respectfully." He

tried to instill into his voice and manner a cutting hauteur.

"Well, now, as to that," resumed the guide, carefully packing his pipe, "just notice in the first place that I'm not your 'good man.' My good services have been yours—about eighteen hours a day for thirty dollars a week; cheap enough for you. And that's about as far as you own *me*. The 'good man' business is more impertinence than I could hand you back if I tried. And as to airing my opinion of 'us,' please notice I'm not saying anything against your people, although I might add that whoever it was that dropped you onto me does not call for my gratitude. But my opinion is, that if they had tanned your hide good while you were a small boy you would probably be a better big one now. What in Sam Hill ails you, anyway?" inquired the guide with a pleasantly contemptuous inflection.

At this question, deeply probing Harold's interest in life, his self-control collapsed. A tear fell on his smoldering cigarette and eloquence mounted to his tongue.

"You coarse devil, you," he sobbed, "what could you comprehend of my sufferings; of the weariness of the flesh, of the ominous mutterings inside of me—"

"Your belly, probably," interjected the coarse devil, ruminatively.

"What do *you* know of the hot flushes, the palpitations, the dull ache everywhere, the nervousness, the dark forebodings—"

"Your liver, I'll bet a ten-spot," asserted Billy with conviction. "You've lapped up grease and sugar enough on this trip alone to kill a goat. Only a goat would climb it off, while you are too poison lazy to work any of it out of your system."

Many times in Harold's life physicians and relatives had expressed, in more delicate phrases, the same conviction. It was the red flag to the bull. Hazeltine sprang to his feet in fury.

"You impudent cur," he shouted, "you mind your own infernal business and obey my orders, you understand!"

Billy Dalton smiled up at the quivering lump. "A flash of ginger. Well, by Hunky!" He rose, stretched, and tapped his pipe on a rock. "I never agreed to take *all* your orders, for I'm the captain of this ship and you don't know navigation. I didn't contract to let you allude to me as a cur, either. And you're liable to be sorry

for that." Though his voice was smooth there was a certain sinister truculence in it which Harold remembered later. The guide pocketed his pipe and sought his blankets.

Left to himself, young Hazeltine, still vibrating intermittently with the dregs of his impotent rage, stood for a while in deep thought. But hunger asserted itself and he glowered at the cold beans, the cold tea and soda biscuits, and the golden mess of apricots. Then he sighed, cast a vengeful glance at the recumbent guide and set to work to mend the fire. When it brightened he searched the pack bags for dainties, selected several highly indigestible articles and both washed and skidded them down with warmed-up, concentrated tea and bacon grease. Then he got into his eiderdown quilts, read a few pungent verses of the "Poetry of Pessimism," switched off his electric lamp and sank into his nightly torpor.

CHAPTER III.

THE DESERTION.

He was partly awakened before dawn by the whinnying of the animals as Dalton led them in turn into the camp. An hour later he was more fully roused by a none-too-light grasp of his shoulder.

"Get up and get your breakfast, if you want any," said Dalton briskly. "We start in half an hour."

Harold rubbed his eyes. It was scarcely daylight. He was conscious of a more than usually miserable feeling in his mouth and stomach; and keenly conscious of a murderous resentment toward the rude disturber of his uneasy repose. It wanted several hours of the usual starting time. Angrily he muttered: "What d'ye mean by this!"

"Got to move to feed, that's all, or they'll twist loose and move without us." Dalton turned on his heel as he spoke, leaving Harold to take the explanation or not, as he chose. Harold chose to mutter imprecations on the guide and to burrow again into his pillow. The end of the half hour found him in the semiconscious lethargy of the dyspeptic, through which sounded the gallop of hoofs on the crisp litter of the forest floor.

The sun was high when young Hazeltine sat up, rubbed his eyes and opened them upon a deserted camp. Guide, animals and outfit had moved on to the nearest feed. At

least that is what Harold surmised. There was nothing to do, evidently, except wait for the man's return with Harold's saddle horse. So he turned on his side and set himself to deciding the fate of the expedition.

He had promised his mother and Madge—dear girl!—to stay out at least two months. Well, he would, of course. But the minute the four-footed brutes were fed they'd all go back, he'd "can" this hound of a Dalton, hire another guide—or rather two or three of them, so they'd have no excuse of overwork—and start out again.

A little of this energy of intention communicated itself to his limbs; he rose imperiously, kicked the quilts away, dressed and looked about for his toilet case. It was gone.

"Damn the fellow!" said Harold. He could not wash the sleep from his eyes or the bad taste from his mouth. It did not occur to him that a creekfull of pure water was of the slightest utility without the elaborate toilet contrivances of the twentieth-century urbanite. Then he went to the camp fire for a cup of coffee. His stomach craved it—medicinally black. But there was no coffee. There was not a sign of utensils or food.

"I'll mulct him in his wages for this!" said the now doubly indignant youth, aloud. He felt for his cigarette case. There was a single dainty tube within it. His match case was empty, but he managed to light the cigarette at the crumbling embers of the fire, after burning his fingers and getting cinders in his eyes. Then, having no chair, he seated himself on a decayed log—loathsome thing!—and snorted revenge with every nasal exhalation of smoke.

He looked at his watch. It was nearly noon. He sauntered along the trail the pack animals had made to where it turned upon a rocky area and was lost—to his inexperienced eye. So he sat down on the ground with his back against a boulder and nursed his knees and his grievances. Very soon he felt the gnawing that simulated hunger in his abused alimentary tract.

"That fellow's got to come, and come mighty quick," said Harold to himself. But nothing at all happened in obedience to this imperative. An hour passed. The creek murmured somewhere down the rocky slope, and two jay birds screamed discordantly at him. There was little else of sound or movement.

At the end of another hour a hawk sailed toward the setting sun, upon which, in some way, an alarm suddenly smote Harold, fetching him to his feet. What if the guide had no intention of returning? What if he purposed compelling his employer to walk in to the new camp, himself the while lazily fishing or hunting? Great Scott, it was nearly five o'clock! Clearly, it was out of the question to attempt it, unless the new camp was very close, and he had no means of knowing that. Already there was chill in the air, a plain hint of the terrors of night on an uncertain trail. He decided he had better stick to his bed, and he almost ran back to the old camp—doubly forlorn for the presence of his disheveled quilts. He dashed to the site of the morning's camp fire and poked in vain for sparks among its charred remains. Then he flung himself miserably upon his bed, covered himself with a quilt and cried softly into his feather pillow: he wept himself to sleep. Hours later, he awoke, shivering in the pitch dark, drew up another eiderdown comforter and slept again, not waking until hunger—a more real hunger, now—roused him at dawn, when he crept out of the quilts, grimy about the eyes, sticky about the body and feet.

First, he walked aimlessly around the camp, unconscious of his reason for doing so, which was the hope that he might spy the guide and a horse or two somewhere. At the end of this survey, he found himself searching among the ashes of the old fire. He did not realize why he did this, either, but his stomach knew, and suddenly he knew also when he came upon some small fragments of biscuit and a few scattered beans. The formerly fastidious invalid bent fascinated eyes upon these morsels; the sight of them seemed to have a moistening effect upon his mouth; he was aware of saliva. Glancing furtively about him, as though he feared some friend might catch him in the act, he gobbled the bits of biscuit, after blowing upon them; and then, on hands and knees, searched out and ate the beans. He managed to retrieve about a dozen. They were a bit gritty, but their flavor was excellent—most excellent.

Great thirst assailed him now, so he went down to the creek and looked in some perplexity at the water. First, he knelt and bent his head to the rippling stream only to find that the water rhythmically lapped his nose and strangled him as he tried to

drink. He thought a moment and then sought a placid pool: there he satisfied his thirst with little difficulty. The water was a delightful thing; he liked even the numbing sting of its coldness in his throat.

He felt a little better, and was sure he could walk to the new camp no matter how far it might be. And then he would do the resting and the guide should return for his bedding, or rather they would pick it up on their return journey to civilization, where the guide might sue him for his wages and be damned. He started briskly away.

He had some difficulty in following the trail now, for it consisted only of the tracks of their own pack train. It was easy to see it in the timber, but in the open places, at stream crossings, and when it twisted about among old moraines, it took all the wit Harold could summon to keep him on the route of the animals. His success in this he soon came to regard as a distinct accomplishment, and the flattering thought followed that the whole thing was an adventure such as he had read and heard of, but had never imagined for himself. It was a diverting episode in a deadly world of all outer and inner things, and in spite of gnawing hunger and dragging limbs he was able occasionally to chuckle over the whole absurd affair.

Nevertheless he was on the verge of tears when, through the trees, he sighted a lovely meadow. This, of course, was the end of the adventure. It only remained for him to saunter into camp with a haughty nonchalance, and with haughty nonchalance he would saunter in if it took the last ounce of his strength—and then and there deliver the cruel and sarcastic tirade upon his contumacious servant which he had long prepared for the fellow. He came stiffly to the timber's edge and looked to right and left for the animals and the camp. *He could see neither.*

New terror assailing him, his weakness forgotten, he ran limping along the edge of the meadow. Halfway around it he paused, gasping for breath; then, alternately walking and running, he had nearly completed the circuit when he fell headlong over the smoldering remains of a camp fire. He rolled out of it, sat up and stared about him.

It was a Bill Dalton camp—the kind of site, the kind of lopped and stumped limbs for the saddles and packs to hang on, the generous pile of wood not yet all gone. It

was complete—and completely empty! Deep tracks were visible in the softer places of the delicate meadow sod, where the animals had luxuriated in the lush grass. No need to have watched them last night, Harold dully thought.

It was just such details that at first usurped the stage of his consciousness, as though his coward mind shrank from the larger fact—the momentous fact that he was deserted! His brain still striving to fend him from this realization, he wiped his blackened hands upon his brown duck clothing and straightway cursed the charcoal smears they made. It was no use—he felt himself sickening within, as his mind surrendered to the obvious. He expected to sob in a moment, from terror more than with rage. But somehow only the sickness—a kind of psychic nausea—held him.

Through it a thought picture limned itself—the picture of a man whose patience had snapped, and who had yielded to a vengeful devil that had whispered—“Leave the disgusting fool—let him starve and rot!” He could see him, his lips set in a cruel sneer, mounting and riding away, followed by his train of fellow brutes—more human than he. This presentment of a thoroughly aroused imagination danced above, below, before him, through him. He had the hideous vision. He must yell—shriek, or—

He made a lightning turn—sharply wrenching his side muscles—and sat up. A greater fear, the fear of going mad, had suddenly driven emotion from him.

“Steady!” Had he said it or only thought it? What was the difference? Steady it was. For it had to be. At least for a while, till he decided whether he wanted to go mad or not. It was *his* affair—he’d go mad or not as he pleased. He’d had his way always, and he’d have it now, by Heaven; he’d—

Strains of many men and women shook themselves from their long sleep in his veins and struggled for dominion over his thought and feeling. And the imprisoned wraiths of one of them—his father, a cool and indomitable spirit—pounded for right of way. Of all of which Harold Hazeltine knew nothing. He knew only that presently he was on his feet, his plump hands clenched, his eyes darting at the old fire.

It had been a large one, a real camp fire, as if the guide had celebrated an infamous decision. Harold advanced upon it with

something of the careful quickness of a cat and, kneeling down, blew upon a smoldering stick. It glowed, dully red. He raked its fellow toward it—he had seen some one do this—the guide, no doubt; and he fanned them cautiously with his hat. In a few moments he had a fire.

The blaze being comradely, he talked to it confidentially: “The fellow that made you first, he’s got me, I suppose. He’s left me to die in this wilderness. The outfit is worth a small fortune to him, no doubt, and he tells his rat’s conscience that I badgered him unmercifully and insulted him. I didn’t, really, did I? Not impolitely, anyhow—not the way I’d do it now if I had him here. Now, I’d—”

The effort to clench his hands as Harold tried to clench them—from his very shoulders down every muscle of his starving, weakened frame—was too much for his equipoise, and he toppled over. He laughed at that—just a bit hysterically—as he sat up and, cool again, with one hand on the ground back of him for support and the other upon his damp forehead, entered upon an experience as new to him as the adventure he had fatuously thought ended when he reached the meadow—intense, sustained, brain-clear thought. For the first time in his life he bit into a vital problem with all the teeth that were in him.

“Now then,” he said to the fire, “what shall we do about it?” He closed his eyes, frowned, opened them again and added: “What do we *want* to do? Life is a nuisance. I decided that long ago. My body’s no good, and just now it’s all in, anyway. So hadn’t we just better say, ‘Good riddance to bad rubbish—body, world, the whole thing!’”

There were numerous passages in point in the “Poetry of Pessimism.” His hand left his forehead and groped toward the little leather-covered volume in his coat pocket. He was about to take it out, when suddenly his thought swerved to the surviving member of the expedition—to Billy Dalton, smirking his satisfaction at every tree and rock and purling stream. Harold’s hand came away from his pocket and clenched itself again upon the imaginary neck of Billy Dalton.

“To think,” gritted Harold, “that I’ve got to die and let that diabolical thing live—and smirk!”

He could not remember anything in the

"Poetry of Pessimism" which gave him any comfort in that thought. Mere pessimism, somehow, did not fit the case. Instead of pessimism, he felt—the blood went to his head at what he felt, and his hand followed it to his head, which was not damp now but hot, hot with the fires of hate!

It seemed a stimulating passion, notwithstanding the many sage injunctions against it, for it transformed young Hazeltine into a sort of anti-Dalton dynamo which thrummed under the current of his emotions.

Dalton had called him a miserable baby, and then abandoned that miserable baby to a lingering, terrifying death. Of course he would die; the miserable baby was dying right now, he supposed, and the degraded cur that murdered him was to go on living—and laughing. God, could he stand it! Could even his bones, picked and bleached, stand it!

Pain struck in upon his seething thoughts—the pain of a bitten lip. He wiped the blood from his mouth with the back of his hand.

"I can't," said Harold, "and I won't."

He had passed through the first heat of his hate and had entered the coolness of it. He rose, jerked from his pocket the "Poetry of Pessimism" and flung it as far as he could. Then he went whistling about the camp to see what he could see.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST LAW OF NATURE.

Though Harold was avid to discover anything at all that the guide might have left, his especial quest is not hard to guess. Quite easily he dropped upon all fours and searched about in the trampled and dusty forest carpet for scraps of food. With military precision he crept back and forth across the space of the kitchen, first to the right and then to the left of the fire, covering every inch of it. He thus discovered by his sense of smell a certain spot under the mat of needles where the dregs from the coffee-pot had been thrown out. The ground was still wet, and the pine needles themselves, though almost dry, were sprinkled with coffee grounds. He marked this interesting spot with an upright stick. For he proposed, if the worst came to the worst—which it was extremely likely to do—to return here and collect and chew the tough

and tasteless little particles. For coffee was a stimulant, and Heaven knew he needed a stimulant!

What had become of the scraps of the guide's supper and breakfast? Had the guide "licked the platter clean?" Harold lay down and cogitated this serious question.

No, the guide was not a plate lick. He had never been a Jack Sprat in Harold's presence, at least. And the rascal had always washed the dishes after each meal: Harold remembered the revolting sight of the dishwater at the end of the process. Now, if the grease and scraps of the meal had not been scraped from the dishes and *thrown* away, they must have been *washed* away into the dishwater; and the dishwater—Harold shuddered at a horrible thought!

Yet the thought—pang-nurtured—persisted. Good Lord, it persisted! It persisted in the assertion that the dishpan had been emptied at some place, and at that place there must be the means of prolonging life a little.

This pertinacious idea made Harold aware that even a pampered baby may be a very complicated being. For while his main soul, as it were, sickened at the thought, his stomach seemed to possess an auxiliary soul which was emancipated from all ridiculous æsthetic sensibilities. He wondered which soul would triumph, and while he wondered, the legs of the starving youth carried him to the edge of the meadow where, as his wise stomach knew, the cur had probably gone to empty the dishpan.

And sure enough. Clinging stickily to the sedges, balanced on their bowed blades, borne up in the chalice of closely branching tufts, were gray-dyed rinds, pale shreds of prunes, a crust or two of sodden biscuit, and a few beans—blessed beans!

Some minutes later he arose, aware that he had gleaned enough merely to tease rather than appease his appetite. And then he saw within a few yards what the guide would have called a bannock—a thick "flap-jack" lying in the damp meadow. He had it in a trice, and wiped it tenderly. It was charcoal upon one side and slimy dough upon the other. Evidently Dalton had left the fire upon some errand, and returning to find his bannock spoiled, had flung it away.

"The blunder that gave you to me," said Harold, as he thrust into it the full semi-

circle of his jaws, "may cost the wretch that made you his life."

It was a small bannock, but it helped. Harold drank from the marshy stream, dragged wood to the fire with the last bit of his remaining strength, covered himself with pine needles and slept an almost dreamless sleep.

He swoke shivering in a cold gray light that revealed cold gray boles of trees shadowing a cheerless meadow. For a few moments he was the old Harold, ready to blubber at the cold, to whine for food, for coffee and a cigarette. But at once to his aid came Harold the hater, and it was the latter that shook his fist at the gaunt trees, sprang up, mended the fire, thrust arms and head into icy water, took off his shirt and dried himself upon it, replaced his shirt and bathed his swollen feet. Then he drank as much water as he could and struck out across the meadow.

As Harold moved energetically along the trail of tracks on this third day of his great adventure, his mind moved at an equal pace—an activity of thought of which he was keenly conscious; for though great changes were taking place in the fellow, his lifelong habit of morbid introspection was not easily unseated.

What was causing it? He did not know, of course. Wretchedly ignorant of self, as all self-centered people are, he could only guess that his peril had sharpened his faculties. This was true. But the main reason was that he was getting rid of the toxins in his blood—foul tinctures, distilled of reckless eating, with which his torpor-enfeebled body had been powerless to cope. Two days of virtual fasting, coupled with sustained exercise, had given his youthful vitality a chance to assert itself. His body and his brain, both naturally excellent, were responding to the purification. Outwardly rather dirty, he was becoming inwardly clean, and the cleansed mechanisms of his brain reviewed his problems swiftly and methodically.

He reasoned that the incarnate devil of a guide had schemed the desertion some time before; that the quarrel had merely served the fellow as a personal pretext for precipitating a well-matured villainy. A cool and calculating miscreant—his perfect woodcraft showed him to be that—he had without doubt carefully prepared an "alibi." Harold was willing to wager that that long let-

ter the man had mailed at the half-breed's camp was a first step in such an alibi. It probably told of the steady decline of the invalid; possibly even of his death; and Dalton would return with a sad tale of a burial in the wilderness—or, more probably, of his drowning in a swift northern river, for that would avoid the danger of an expedition to exhume the body from its grave.

That was Harold's theory of murder for revenge. But on the theory of murder for theft—a more likely explanation, he felt—Dalton would have no intention of returning, either with or without an alibi; and he would be striking out for another part of North America—Alaska or the Yukon, it would be. Sure of the death of the weakling by starvation in the camp in which he had left him, he would travel north and west, hunting and fishing, riding along between times, whistling those old-fashioned, loutish tunes of his—the man was a moral idiot! He would almost forget that Harold Hazeltine had ever existed.

It was nicely conceived but for one thing: the guide had somehow overlooked the power of hate. Perhaps he was ignorant of this power, as Harold himself had been. It was good that he was, for he would move over the country slowly, never suspecting that a Nemesis was plodding in his wake!

The boy turned now to the problem of prolonging his life—this swift, clear, seeing, feeling, moving life that, in spite of starvation—*because of it*, had Harold only known—had opened to him. This new existence was a novelty; and novelty, to pampered, sated Harold was a rare thing. Well, it would give life zest, and zest in turn would aid him in the struggle to prolong life till his master object, vengeance, was accomplished.

And that achieved—how Harold's mind raced on!—what of the zest of life? Why, Madge! He had never dared to more than dream of her, for the philosophy of pessimism had forbade the thought of possessing her—Madge, vital with splendid girlhood, he sinking into a premature grave. But suppose there had been some mistake? Suppose that hate, naked in the wilderness, could cure where love, surfeited with wealth and luxury, had failed? Was it possible that there could lie between the pages of the philosophy of pessimism so good a joke as that?

Harold began to feel very weak. His

body had been going as fast as his brain, and his brain needed less food than his body to sustain the pace. Alarm seized him, and he sank upon the hill slope up which he had been striding, and put his hand to his heart, that all-pervading nausea, that sickening perspiration, again upon him.

Really, all he needed was water and a slower gait, for of food he still had plenty in his fatty tissues. But he thought his hour had come. He closed his eyes and gave himself up to bitter reflections. His last months in civilization passed in review, then the frontier town, the outfitting, the trip, the desertion—the dastard guide—Dalton! Once more to the aid of the despairing youth that saving hatred sprang. Once more the ghosts of his fighting forbears rose in his heated blood—always, when he was about to succumb, their steel offered itself to his grasp. He stood up, surprised at how much better he felt, and searching his mind for an effective expletive. It came to him:

"Odds Bodkins!" said Harold—a mysterious resurrection of some old literary memory. Somehow it fitted, and many times thereafter he uttered it—very whimsically, toward the last.

"It's grub," he added. "That's my whole problem. The fool guide leaves scraps, and there's things to eat all round me. *I'm going to eat*: Everything else will take care of itself."

He trudged the hills and hollows at a slow but carefully sustained pace, and after a long while he came to the top of a mile-long slope and saw below him, at the base of an abrupt, rocky declivity, a tiny vale set with an emerald spot of grass.

He paused, warily. Dalton might be there. To approach him openly was, of course, simply to be shot, for after deserting Harold, Dalton must know he was guilty of intent to murder and that he must either kill the younger man, be killed by him, or go ultimately to the penitentiary.

Harold could see no signs of life in the little valley, but, as he had surmised, it had been the guide's haven for the night. From the base of the rocky slope the tracks led him to a grove at the meadow's edge, and here was the camp. He was racked; exhausted; he felt himself to be just hollow, aching bones strung together. But it was still early afternoon, and *he had actually gained on the guide!*

There were few scraps from Dalton's sup-

per and breakfast, but again the old fire was capable of rekindling; the slope which he had just descended was alive with berries, some of which were already ripe; and, best of all, there were the remains of a grouse—that is to say certain uncooked remains which fastidious, well-fed people like Billy Dalton consider to be *wholly inedible*. Upon these details, flung out from the camp with disdain, Harold Hazeltine fairly pounced.

CHAPTER V.

A CUNNING SAVAGE.

A creature that had once been Harold Hazeltine stood on a barren height of land that overlooked the Arctic watershed of one of Canada's great rivers. Patches of old snow lay in the cirques of deep north-side gulches, and there was an occasional gleam of it where the dark forests straggled out upon the margins of bare, rocky plateaus.

It was a wild and savage landscape, but a fit setting for the wild and savage figure that shaded piercing gray eyes with a hard, brown hand—looking for something. His undershirt, itself much torn, showed through great gaps and tatters of his blue flannel overshirt. His khaki trousers were in like condition, but his shoes, originally of the best within the cobbler's art and plentifully hobnailed, though scuffed and worn, still held. His socks had long since gone—at least from his feet; but he had used their uppers to patch his undershirt, sewing with a raveling from his frayed trousers pushed through the fabric with a stout thorn.

Gaunt as he was, his height was conspicuous. His long, light-brown hair and beard were almost matched in hue by the deep tan of his face, neck, chest and bare arms. Long ago every vestige of fat had gone to feed him, and his lean frame was laced in sinews supple in the relax but tense in action.

He had come up to this observation point along a ridge trail. He knew these beaten paths of the moose, and never confused them with the more scattered lowland trails of the caribou, whose routes headed for shallow crossings of the main streams. Nor did he mistake these for the occasional old, blurred trails of Indians and voyageurs which, in the earlier weeks of his struggle to live, had tempted him with the promise of leading to some distant Hudson's Bay post. It was fear of the uncertainty of these that had at first dissuaded him, but later, as his reli-

ance in his power to forage for himself grew, he had considered the idea of turning directly south and making for civilization, well knowing both the distance and the danger. But always the thought of the guide escaping his just vengeance held him, a pursuing fury, on his course. For as his strength and craft had grown, his hate, if it had not increased, had at least not diminished. That hate, his sustainer and teacher, should sustain and teach him to the end, and he would overtake and kill the fiend unless he himself perished in the effort.

He believed he would have overtaken him long ago had he not been obliged to spend so much time hunting his food. For the leavings of the guide and the berries and edible roots he found had very early in the game proved far too little for his needs, and partial starvation had goaded him to find ways of capturing meat. It dragged to light long-buried memories of shifts and expedients of which he had lazily read in books of travel, and it stimulated ingenuity to use them. Thus, after many failures he snared rabbits, squirrel and ptarmigan, at first with one of his shoe strings, all but the noose of it carefully concealed by leaves; later, and more successfully, with horse hairs which had been caught in the bark of trees against which the animals had switched their tails. Several times he managed to sneak up behind boulders and flail fish from shallow riffles with a broom of thin, dry branches. And once he actually came within an ace of catching a young mountain sheep, and his mouth watered for that lost mutton for days. In spite of these successes, however, there were hunger times when he lived on gritty hate and water!

At first he had longed for a gun. A little later, when he managed to procure food without it, he still longed for a gun—to use on Billy Dalton. All that was in the days of his weakness. He did not want a gun now. He wanted only his hands. But since a cowardly murderer like Dalton would shoot him the moment he saw him and realized his crime had failed, Harold planned to come upon the guide in the night, remove the guns to a safe distance, and wake and grapple with him man to man. He had trained his hands and arms and back for just this purpose—trained them after a drastic fashion of his own! His legs, of course, had strengthened perfectly of themselves.

Shading his eyes against the afternoon sun, he searched for smoke. Many times since the pack train entered the mountain region he had taken such an observation, but without avail. Now, as his eyes swept the winding valley below him, he uttered a cry—a roar, almost—of exultation. For, far off over the tops of the timber, he saw the bluish vapor of dry-wood smoke. It was very far away, but it could mark no other spot than the camp of Billy Dalton. Mechanically, Harold reached up for his hat to throw it in the air, forgetting he had accidentally burned it some time before in the first camp fire he had lit with the dry sticks with which he had practiced morning, noon and night for weeks on end before he had found and mastered the trick of it.

As a substitute he threw a rock. It was a large one—suited to the magnitude of his sensations—and the fellow hurled it far. Now was his chance. It was a slim one, for he happened to be very hungry and tired. He had been unlucky the last few days in catching the prey on which he relied for the hard traveling and grueling training he had lately forced upon himself.

Yes, the chance was slim, but he would take it. He would travel by the last of the daylight—it was not so long a daylight now as when the guide had left him to die; but there would be a fair-sized moon coming up over the mountain and he would press on, a half-famished bloodhound on the scent. He had grown to rely on that singular entity which had developed within him—a will of adamant. He would make that camp before daybreak. He would steal some of his own food, rest a bit, and then he would fulfill the oath he had taken to the stars. So he made off down the hill.

Harold was very expert now in following the tracks. In daylight he never swerved a foot, let the trail be over bare rocks, even. While the daylight lasted, therefore, he fairly raced. But there came a period between the wane of the dusk and the coming of the moon when the pursuing savage had to slow his pace almost to that of a snail. It was even a hands-and-knees job in the worst of the darkness. But when the moon rose he found to his delight that he made good time, at least in the open. Through the patches of timber the work was still exasperating. He kept doggedly on, however, till dawn light glimmered, and then, in a turn, where the way lay narrow be-

tween the torrent and the sharp hill slope, he heard the sudden jangling of a bell! He ran swiftly around the bend in time to see a dark object fling granite dust from flying heels and disappear.

He had frightened what? The bell mule, surely. Then he was near the camp, and the cursed mule would waken the guide, unless the guide was so used to the sound of the bell that—

What was it dangling from that balsam limb? It was a short length of very light rope—broken. Harold paused and studied it. The mule had torn away from that young fir tree. The fool guide had tied the animal there before he made camp and had then forgetfully gone off and left him; and the patient animal had waited all night, till Harold's footsteps had frightened him. He had jerked up his head, snapped the frail rope, and was now speeding toward the camp. How far was the camp?

Stifling his pangs of hunger, he quickened his pace. Nevertheless it was nearly broad daylight before he made the grazing ground of the camp. He knew those camps by now. And, like all the rest, this one too was deserted! Harold cursed most feelingly.

On the far side of the meadow the fire was still burning brightly; a small coffepot was on the coals—nearly dry; and a piece of bacon with some slices cut from it lay near by on a rock. Evidently the decamping had been precipitate—there was some satisfaction in that! The guilty devil was afraid of what might have scared his mule—afraid of visitors—afraid of his own shadow.

"Well, better luck next time," muttered the disappointed sleuthhound. "And in the meantime—bacon and coffee!" Harold ate the bacon raw—every scrap of it. That new stomach of his—the stomach of an ostrich—took what was given it with thanks, and was never heard from till it needed more.

Then he looked into the coffepot and found a boiled-down liquor, black as ink. He diluted it, heated it and took a swallow. It was good coffee, he supposed—as coffee went. But the young savage had lost his taste for drugs. It was as repellent to him as it would have been to a young horse. He threw it away, pot and all, dexterously built his usual V-shaped fire and lay down to sleep.

He never saw smoke again. With packs lightened by more than three months of

consumption, the guide traveled fast. The route, which latterly had been westward, had since curved southwestward and then south, and they were leaving the mountains. In another week—Harold recorded the passing of the days by tooth marks in a pocket stick—the Nemesis made a discovery: the trail showed hoof marks going in both directions. What could it mean?

He went down on his hands and knees and examined and measured the tracks. He rose and went farther, to find and measure them all. Thus he discovered that the same string of animals had passed in both directions. *They were back in their northbound trail!* The guide was not going to Alaska; he was returning to his old haunts—perhaps to the very frontier town from which they had started.

Harold threw back his tawny head, and his laughter peeled upon the air and came back to him from a bare hillside beyond.

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETURN.

The days were short, the morning air was eager, the trees were searing when young Hazeltine found himself once more on beaten trails, and then upon a road—an old log road which he hardly remembered, for when he had ridden upon it a century or two ago he was a listless, unobserving thing.

Soon he saw men, first at a distance on the river, then upon the old road. He passed two of them, driving burros. He saluted them gayly, but they stared at him and were very wary. This made him look at himself in the first still pool he came to, and he caught his reflection plainly enough to decide to leave the road and hide in the brush whenever he heard the sound of hoofs or the crunch of a wheel.

At last the long descent into the valley where the town of Russell sprawled. It was near sundown of a golden day of late October, and Harold glided into the timber, snared his last rabbit and made his last solitary camp. In the morning he fastened on his feet the two battered objects which for a month had been slung to his waist in order to save the remnants of their soles for an emergency, and walked briskly into the town.

Along the main street a few early birds viewed him with open-mouthed wonder as he strode boldly into Russell's chief hos-

tely. He and the archfiend had lodged there a century or two ago—the night before they started on their journey. He recognized the proprietor who did not, however, recognize him. In fact the proprietor ran to the woodbox and seized a stout poker.

Harold spoke—after several efforts. His voice was at first too low, then too loud. At the third attempt it sounded, if not natural, at least of a right and gentlemanly volume.

"Good morning, sir. Don't be alarmed. I'm—Mr. Hazeltine." He laughed and corrected himself. "Or, at least, I *was* Mr. Hazeltine. I suppose I'm still *Hazeltine*. Recollect me?"

Something in the voice and manner allayed the fears and challenged the memory of the hotel man. He dropped the weapon, came a little closer, and was finally persuaded by the hairy wild man to submit to the bone-crushing process of shaking hands.

Harold had left a pair of suit cases in the place; but he tarried in the room assigned him only long enough to wash his face and hands. Then he fell down the stairs, peeped into the little dining room, and observing it to be empty entered and backed awkwardly into a chair. The proprietor hurried after him and took his order.

"Nobody here I'll scare?" questioned the biped.

"Well, there's no guest from out of town, sir, except a young—" He turned in dismay toward the creaking door. Harold turned also and stared into the staring eyes of Madge Loring.

The young girl, a vision of morning loveliness, slowly opened her lips—but not to speak. The sun-browned, hairy giant who rose, half naked, before her seemed like a remote progenitor of the youth she had known—some cave-man incarnation of him upon whom rags of modern clothing had been flung. Actual recognition came but slowly.

"Is it Harold?" she asked, timidly.

For answer the cave man set his great hands upon lank hips and roared his laughter at the ceiling.

"It was," he declared.

Swiftly she approached and studied him intently at close range. Then she put out her hand to his cordial clasp.

"Don't," she shrieked, and Harold dropped her hand and nearly fell down with

remorse. "Heavens, what a clamp!" She winced and smiled at the same time.

"Well, so you're back?" A kind of embarrassment to both of them had succeeded.

"Back—yes," said Harold, his brow darkening. Then the mystery of her presence there struck him.

"But how do *you* come to be *here*?" Mechanically they had seated themselves.

Madge carefully polished her plate with a paper napkin.

"Well," she replied, "we were terribly worried of course. And at last I volunteered to come and look for you."

"Is my mother ill?" asked Harold in alarm.

"No, no; but there was nothing to be gained by her waiting around here—no conveniences or comforts. I'm a sort of advance agent."

"For the circus," added Harold gayly; "a menagerie of one—sort of 'Gosh, there ain't no such animal!'"

"There certainly 'ain't no such animal'—not among our friends, at least."

She had fallen to studying him again, and he let her—placidly, without embarrassment, now; wearing his rags with the utterly unconscious pride of a king of beasts. And he thought he saw in the girl's face deep approval of the antithesis he made to every being she had ever known.

Directly, she told him of affairs at home, chatting naturally—covering his awkward handling of the table utensils. But not one question did she put to him about himself, so that he forgot his great wrong and felt only the beauty and freshness and charm of Madge. The sweet, even timbre of her voice enthralled him, and he was conscious that he had brought back with him from the wilds, along with his will to live, a will to *have*—to have this girl—

Suddenly footsteps sounded in the hotel lobby.

"Quick," she whispered, instantly. She sprang up, seized him by his wrist and whisked him out of a side door.

"You'd frighten mere men to death, you monster," she said. "Stay here now." She backed him into an arbor. "And please don't move till I return." The pliant animal obeyed. In a few moments Madge was back with a large camera.

"It would be a shame," she explained. "I could never forgive myself if I didn't snap you just as you are, rags and all. You'll

never look like this again, you know. Now don't——" She looked for protest, but there was none. Harold had left his vanity somewhere in the north woods.

"Go as far as you like," he said amiably. "Isn't that what we used to say?"

"In the misty past," she added, mockingly, "when we were young—and handsome."

"Come now," said Harold presently, "how many of those things are you going to take?"

Madge peeped at a red eye in the camera. "There are tiffree more films," she announced. "Now that side view once again. It shows your bare calf to perfection, and—and the big rip farther up."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOME REVELATIONS.

They left each other in the hallway upstairs with an arrangement by which Madge went to her room and prepared long "day letters," while Harold went to his, fumbled open his suit cases, got out some clothes, bathed, dressed and sought the nearest barber shop, whence he emerged with clean white jaws that contrasted oddly with his tanned upper face and neck, went to the bridge just out of town and there met his pretty cousin, who was attired in a walking costume.

"Oh," she said, a little ruefully.

"Oh what?" said Harold, a little disappointed, too.

"The savage is gone," said Madge in mock dismay, "and only a tan-and-white creature of this age is left. But," she added sweetly, "a really wonderful, wonderful one."

"Come on," said Harold, "and don't let me walk too fast for you."

They were soon alone and safe from disturbance in a little wooded hollow off the road.

"Now, young woman," began Hazeltine, "I've done some thinking. Moreover, I've seen the hotel register which states that you reached this place only yesterday. Pray, how did you guess my arrival so exactly? Was it just a coincidence?"

"Well, you see the way it was—— Oh pshaw. Say, Harold, let's make another little bargain. Tell me about your trip first. You know I'm simply dying to learn all about it. And by the way——" her tone was

casual, "where is the guide, this——Mr. Dalton, wasn't it?"

A black cloud came over Hazeltine's face. Every muscle in his body stiffened.

"Mr. Dalton," he said through his clenched teeth. "Well, Mr. Dalton I haven't seen for many months."

The girl raised her eyebrows mildly.

"But it hasn't been my fault. I've dogged the cur for one hundred and twenty-seven days—and nights. But he's somewhere round here in this country—and I'll get him—I'll get him!"

Almost frightened, Madge gazed with something very like awe at the face of the passion-possessed man bending forward beside her, his bony fists knotted, his eyes half closed by his down-drawn brows. She touched his hand.

"Harold," she said quietly, "tell me all about it."

And he did. Leaving out the sordid details, he swiftly sketched the story of the quarrel and desertion, of the anguish and bitterness of his struggle with the physical world, and of that still sterner grapple with the greater world within him.

Eagerly, intently, Madge Loring listened, with no word of interruption. Several times she glanced up into his deadly earnest face—that was all.

"I'm sorry I couldn't get him out there." Harold's arm swept toward the blue, northward hills. "It would have saved a fuss—for you and mother. But I promised I'd live and get him; I promised the spirit of my dad—— He seemed to be around, somehow. You know what a man he was—they've told you." He turned to her suddenly:

"And now that I *am* alive, and you're so——so beautifully alive—— Oh, Madge," he cried, and devoured her with his yearning eyes.

"Madge," he said again, his hands gently upon her shoulders, "will you care very much——will you blame me when I——"

"When you hunt him down with detectives, and have him arrested and punished?"

"No," he answered sharply, "not arrested. I'll hunt him down, with detectives if necessary. But I'll attend to the rest of it myself. There are crimes that are personal: This is between him and me."

"And if I asked you to forget and forgive?" She put her face very close to his. He took her clasped hands between his own.

"Madge," he answered huskily, "you know how much I've always cared for you. But—bedeviled weakling that I was—I couldn't decently have told you. Yet you knew, Madge, didn't you?"

"Yes," she said steadily.

"Well, think of that bedeviled weakling out there. A sick whelp with a small jack-knife and the clothes on his back. He had nothing to offer the frowning gods of the wild—nothing but hate and his oath. Yet they saw him through—they and his father. I'm here——" he struck the sod. "Alive on the good earth, not moldering upon it. And now, would you have me false—a traitor to it all?"

Harold had learned the ways of the gods of earth, but not of the goddesses that hover half on, half over it. Of these was Madge. Perplexingly to the wrought-up savage, she rose with a smile, kissed him lightly on the forehead, and reached her hand down for him to rise. He obeyed her somewhat morosely, though his heart beat wildly to her kiss.

"Come back to the hotel, you seething caldron," she said. "I want to show you something."

Rapidly they retraced their way through the now busy little town into the lobby of the hotel, where she left him and went upstairs, returned, beckoned him to follow her, and seated him in the only armchair in her room.

"Now, then," she began, briskly, "here are two letters that will interest you. But you must promise to read them through without uttering a word of comment. I've some little things to do and if you are silent while you read you won't bother me a bit."

Hazeltine took the letters wonderingly.

"What the deuce is it all about, Madge?"

"Do you promise?"

"Yes," he said at length, and he read the first letter:

Near a Half-Breed's Camp,
Otter River, June 17th.

MY DEAR MISS LORING: As this may be my last chance to get a letter out, and as I have about made up my mind what ought to be done with this baby elephant you wished on me, I guess I'd better send you a report.

You won't show this to Mrs. Hazeltine, of course, so there won't be any harm in telling you frankly how the chap strikes me and what I think is the matter with him.

He's good-natured when he has his way, but he must have his way or he goes to pieces. And having his way means just one thing—six feet under the daisies. He loads his carcass with rich

truck, even out here, for he brought along all sorts of fancy goods which he makes me slop up for him, and you know how a stomach is when it's abused—it has no appetite for plain, wholesome food. He don't do a lick of work; won't hunt, fish, walk or fool around even. He reads highbrow rot and quotes it at the trees in a graveyard voice. He can't really see anything around him, don't know he's alive, don't seem to care whether he is or not and, unless all signs fail, won't be very long. You said you folks and the doctor had done all sorts of things, and a simple life with air and exercise was the only thing left.

But you can't make a man live that kind of a life simply by sending him off into the north woods with plenty of animals and grub and a comfortable camp chair if he's the boss and don't want to.

I can't make him want to. Any suggestion from me just brings a chilly stare to his pale, flabby face. He looks on me as an ignorant hired man—he's just changed valets and surroundings, and proposes to live as he always has—if you can call it living. The only difference is that out here he can kill himself faster than at home. But he won't go home because he promised his mother to stay out three months, so the question is, How am I going to get him home alive? When you said it was a desperate case you said it all, and you know that desperate ills need desperate remedies.

Now, the way I reason about him is this: He's got a crust that no one can break into, so no one outside of that crust can help him. He's the only one inside of that crust, so he's got to help himself. Will he? Now you say that his mother and the doctors feel that he has no will power because he wouldn't change his habits. Why, he didn't want to change them. That's self-indulgence, not weak will. Hasn't he managed to have his way with every living being that ever came against him? Believe me, that's will power. He's got slathers of it.

And therefore I size him up as a dead safe proposition to do what he wants to do against any odds. He thinks he don't care whether he lives or dies, but I've heard that rot before! And the plain thing to do is to get him up against a "root, hog, or die" proposition and force him to make his decision before it's too late.

So my scheme is to let him shift for himself. A fellow that has made every one dance to his music for twenty-two years has got it in him to dance to his own, and he'll dance himself back to civilization or I miss my guess.

Now, don't imagine I'm going to really desert him. But I'll certainly make him think so. I'll let him quarrel with me, or rather I'll quarrel back, and then leave him and make him follow on and live on his nerve and wits, or die, just as he pleases. At least that's the way it will look to him.

At first, I'll use his fresh horse at night and cut around back to be sure he's all right—or right enough, at least. And when I find he's up and coming I'll certainly give him fresh air and exercise for many moons. Just tell Mrs. Hazeltine if we like it we'll keep out longer, and not to worry even if we don't get back till snow flies.

Somehow, I think you'll say Amen when you read this letter, or you wouldn't have looked me so steady in the eye when you shook hands and said: "Billy, I trust you absolutely. Do just what you think best." I'm going to do just what I would if he was my own kid brother, for somehow I like the pup—I don't know why. So here's luck to the scheme. Your sincere friend,
WM. DALTON.

Hazeltine shot up from his chair and turned on Madge, his head high. The girl, fussing with a frock, frowned at him, a reminding finger across her lips. He collapsed in the chair and read the second letter. It was written and mailed four days before, in Russell.

Nov. 22d.

MY DEAR MISS LORING: Well, I'm back, and your fourth cousin is coming after me—and my scalp—like the milltail of hell.

Durn him, he's pretty near wore out the whole bunch of us—horses, mules and me—keeping out of his way.

I hope you got the letter I sent out by the half-breed last June, and if you did you'll know the game I played. I stripped the camp clean as a whistle, and left him in bed sleeping off one of his usual suicide pacts with his stomach. I went on about ten miles, made camp, mounted his fresh horse, worked back along the sidehill to near the old camp and watched him. I knew he'd wait for me to come back, and he did, the whole day. But next morning he started off, and I beat it pronto back to my camp and moved on another eight or ten miles, leaving enough fire to last till he'd come up, for he hadn't sense enough to hang on to one of his fancy blankets. I left some scraps, too; just enough to whet his appetite and make him mad at having to eat refuse.

I figured to keep him mad, and I guess I did, because pretty soon I found that I didn't have to coax him along the trail any more. He was coming of his own free will and chasing me hard. On the back track, at several of his camps, I saw saplings uprooted, bark-skinned, and badly mauled generally. They puzzled me at first till I figured out that he had used 'em for wrestling partners!

I kept a good margin of safety between us after that, for though I'm generally allowed to be some husky brute myself, I was none too keen for a bout with the young gentleman that had twisted those saplings out of the earth. And I was too proud of my handiwork to care to spoil it with a gun. The plain truth, miss, is that I'd done too good a job!

If he hadn't had to spend a lot of time learning to prey on the country for his grub, I believe I'd have had to travel night and day to keep from being murdered. In fact, he nearly got me one night, anyhow. I had been afraid that if he caught sight of my camp, and there happened to be a moon, he'd keep going all night. So during moon periods I had put a bell on my scariest mule and tied her out in the trail with a piece of light line which she'd bust at the slightest alarm. Then, before turning in I'd

make the packs ready, and saddle up the whole string with loose cinches.

One morning in comes the mule a-snorting. And you can just bet your life, young lady, that in ten minutes I had the packs on, and we were jingling down the valley. Since then that hound has run us ragged, as I before stated. This last week or two I lightened ballast and spurred hard in order to gain on him, and if we're even a few days ahead we're doing well.

He'll come in needing money and things, so it might be a good idea for one of you folks to happen along up here and meet him. You'll find me resting up at Hawkin's Mill, four miles out on the Stevens meadow road. But for God's sake square me with that mamie before he finds out where I am and steals a gun. Your sincere but anxious friend,
WM. DALTON.

Young Hazeltine dropped the letters, leaned forward in his chair, took his chin in his hands and stared fixedly at the floor. His lower teeth scraped away at his upper lip.

Once he glanced at the intently watching girl for a single instant, and then resumed his staring at the floor. He was in the clutch of thoughts as bitter as any he had tasted during his long fight with cold and starvation. But they were thoughts, not of a bitter wrong, but of a bitter humiliation.

"I can't kill him," he whispered half to himself. He sought to hide the stress of his surging feelings by striding to the window, his back to Madge, whose heart was beating fast.

She went to him timidly and touched his arm.

"I'm sorry," she said.

After a little he turned from the window, somewhat master of himself, and asked quietly:

"Who is this man Dalton?"

"The Daltons are old family friends. In the summertime, for many years, we used to almost live at their big ranch. He taught me to shoot and fish when I was a pigtailed tad. I got him to go with you at some sacrifice, for he is a rather busy man, with many interests."

He put his hand on her hair. "You took a lot of trouble about me, Madge."

The girl's eyes filled with tears.

"Your mother has been a mother to me, Harold, these last two years," she replied with downcast eyes. After a little Hazeltine said:

"Where is this Dalton now?"

Madge looked at him searchingly.

"Will you forgive him?" She had to wait some moments for his reply.

"I shan't—harm him," said Harold finally.

"Then—he is here," said Madge. She walked swiftly down the hall and returned with Billy Dalton.

The two men faced each other across the room. If Dalton had smiled, Hazeltine, despite his promise, might have sprung at the man's throat, for he was as yet unpracticed in the restraint of those virile passions which had so long lain dormant. But the guide's face was stoical. He waited, hat in hand—a strong man, sure of his strength.

As the silence grew tense, the girl's face flamed. She sprang imperiously toward the sullen, glowering youth and said in a resonant voice:

"Harold Hazeltine, you listen to me. You know what you were—a miserable creature, a chronic, hopeless hypochondriac. The doctors gave you up. I didn't—because I *knew* what you were, deep down. I started this, I—deliberately. But Billy Dalton *did* it. He, too, with no coaching from me—his letter shows you that—he, too, sensed the man that slumbered in you. It was heroic treatment, Harold, but it was the only way."

She turned for a swift moment to the head of the bed, came to Harold with something in her hand, and brought him face to face with the mirror of her dresser. Then she propped up against the mirror the thing she had taken from under her pillow, the photograph of a heavy, pallid young man in an invalid chair, a gray-haired woman on one side, a servant on the other.

"Here," she exclaimed, "look at this." And she pointed to the photograph. "Study it well, and then compare it with this." And she pointed above the pitiful picture to his splendid image in the glass.

"Who made that difference, Harold Hazeltine?"

"He did, I suppose."

"No!" cried Madge triumphantly. "If he had done it you would not owe him half the debt you do, for he would have been only your benefactor. *You did it!* He made you *make yourself*. That was friendship—the very quintessence of friendship."

Hazeltine slowly nodded, as he raised his eyes now from the sickly spectacle upon the pasteboard to his own vivid image in the glass.

"Oh, Madge," he faltered, with a rush of feeling, "you had faith in me all the time—faith in the creature that I was. Let me show my gratitude. Let me devote my life to you." He put out his arms to her.

Dalton had turned hurriedly toward the door.

"Wait, Billy," said Madge. She looked up at the humbled, pleading youth. "On one condition, Cousin Harold."

His face cleared. He turned to the guide, all hatred banished from his heart.

"I guess I know that condition," he said with a sunny smile. "You want Billy Dalton to stand up with us when we are married. Will you, Bill?"

"You bet I will," said Dalton.

And Harold gripped his hand.

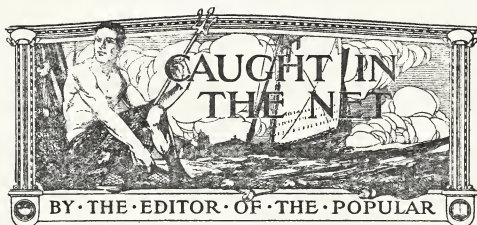


BUSINESS AND ATHLETICS

WILLIAM GIBBS MCADOO, who may now be described as quite a busy gentleman in handling the United States Treasury Department, Liberty Loans and all the railroads in the country, is a crack tennis player and horseback rider. He believes his ability to get away with big jobs is due to his outdoor exercise.

One of his recent exploits was to hold a business conference by long-distance telephone with a railroad man in New York while he was making notes on his desk pad of a conversation he was having with a committee of men intrusted with the sale of certain Liberty Loan bonds.

He held the telephone receiver to his ear by placing one end of it in the hollow of his shoulder, thus freeing his hand for the writing of the notes. He heard all that was said in his office and at the other end of the telephone wire, made all the comments necessary and concluded both jobs satisfactorily and simultaneously.



THE CLOWN PRINCE AND THE FOURTH LIBERTY LOAN

FOR the Fourth Liberty Loan, planned for October, \$8,000,000,000 is required. To put this huge sum over the top, every man, woman and child in continental United States must contribute, roughly, \$80. We have already floated \$7,563,000,000 of Liberty Bonds.

Germany's sixth war loan produced \$3,690,000,000. The average for every man, woman and child was, roughly, \$54. Germany had already floated over \$11,000,000,000 of war bonds. And Germany has only about one-third our national wealth. Her \$54 a head meant much more than our proposed \$80 per capita, for one-seventh of her population was then in uniform and no longer producing, as against one out of thirty in America.

How about *your* response to this fourth appeal for the war chest?

Uncle Sam cannot wait for the money. He will spend a good chunk of it in advance. To meet his war bill of \$50,000,000 a day, he is selling \$6,000,000,000 in treasury certificates at the rate of \$750,000,000 every two weeks. To raise this, every bank has been asked to contribute five per cent of its gross resources monthly. Later, we must float the big loan to take up this indebtedness.

If we at home can't beat the Germans at home in raising money, we are pikers to expect the American doughboys to lick the German soldiers in the trenches.

We hear a lot of talk about keeping the kaiser in Europe. The kaiser is bad enough, but did you ever study a picture of the crown prince? He is scheduled to be the kaiser before a great many years. Gerard says the crown prince loves war for the sake of war—as a sport.

Every dollar fired into the American war chest is a bullet fired at the peewee, at the clown prince who will succeed the kaiser unless we put both out of business. That cannot be done without money. Uncle Sam has to pay for what he buys—the same as you do. If we don't buy Liberty Bonds, he can't spend.

When you have cash, you intrust it to a bank. Uncle Sam pays better interest and is safer.

Your share is *more* than \$80. That \$80 must be the average for every man, woman and child.

Come across!—or the crown prince will.

THEY NEVER COME BACK WITHOUT THEIR MAN

ALARGE detachment of Royal Northwest Mounted Police arrived in France during July, on their way to the front. Eight hundred of them—practically the complete personnel—are now operating in the war zone as several squadrons of cavalry. This outfit has furnished some mighty good stories for **POPULAR** readers, and in the passage of a large part of it from police to military service our cheers will be mellowed with regret.

Early in 1917, the Dominion government abrogated its agreements with Alberta and Saskatchewan, under which the R. N. W. M. P. policed the two provinces. Despite their petitions to be sent to the firing lines, they were held in Canada more than a year to keep an eye on alien districts where trouble was in the air.

During its forty-five years' service as a police unit, the Royal Mounted became the most famous body of its kind. From it emerged the Strathcona Horse, the roughriding corps of South African War renown.

In a sense, their departure will strip the Canadian Northwest of much of its romance. They were picturesque individuals—with natty Stetson hats, scarlet jackets, shining tan boots, and blue trousers with an inch-and-a-half yellow stripe down the side of each leg. In an area of almost two million square miles, each of the eight hundred kept an average of fourteen hundred people on their good behavior.

Besides his police duties, he was first on hand to fight prairie fires and disease epidemics. He served as game warden, guarded Indian treaty money in transit and led relief expeditions. At times he carried mails. In crossing uncharted country, he made maps and scientific reports. All this, in addition to being the terror of "wanted by law." It is said of the R. N. W. M. P., that they never came back without their man—dead or alive—when once detailed on a chase.

The Hudson Bay Company was the only organized force in the Canadian wilderness until the Royal Mounted followed them in 1873.

With shrewd psychology, they adopted crimson coats, for the Indians hated blue—the color of uniforms of soldiers, their sworn enemies. After the Custer Massacre, Sitting Bull fled to Canada but found it impossible to incite the Indians against the Royal Mounted—who finally peacefully convinced S. Bull that he had better go back home.

Now they're after the kaiser—and they never come back without their man.

THE KAISER'S SONS—INCLUDING ATILA

THE kaiser has six sons: Frederick William, Eitel Frederick, Adalbert, August William, Oscar, and Joachim. The first of these is the crown prince, whose name is as much an inheritance as the title itself, for as far back as it is worth while to inquire, the first-born son of the reigning family of Prussia has had both Frederick and William among the names bestowed on him at birth.

It is therefore among the appellations of the other sons that one may search for some clew to the kaiser's mental outlook—for the kaiserin doubtless had very little to say on the subject, being fortunate if she was allowed to name her only daughter. Skipping for the moment the second son, we will take the others in the order of their ages. Adalbert was the name of several men famous in early church history, including English, Bohemian, and German, but as there was a prince of Prussia so called, who was a nephew of Frederick William III., and who died in 1873 after helping to organize the German marine, it was probably in honor of him that the present Prince Adalbert was so designated.

The kaiser worships the memory of Frederick the Great, whose brother was General August William, and therefore it is easy to understand why his fourth son was so named. The next one, Prince Oscar, doubtless received that appellation as a compliment to his imperial father's friend, King Oscar of Sweden. There was once an Italian mystic named Joachim, but the Hohenzollern mind has never been devoted to mystical pursuits, and so it is much more probable that the sixth son, Prince Joachim, was so called in honor of a famous Hungarian violinist and composer, who instructed the members of the royal family, and who died at Charlottenburg in 1907.

And now we will consider Eitel Frederick's name. He is the kaiser's favorite, and has been from birth, and it is only reasonable to conclude that, with the world's nomenclature to select from, his father should give him the one name that in his heart of hearts he honors above all others. What, then, does the name Eitel mean in Latin and English? Listen, my children, and you shall hear: It means Attila, and Attila was the greatest Hun of them all. The "Scourge of God," he was termed by medieval writers because of the ruthless and widespread destruction wrought by his arms. It is not nec-

essary here to give his history, but it is enough to state that Attila appears in the half barbaric German legends, notably in the Nibelungenlied, as Etzel, the spelling of which later was changed to Eitel. Historians say that the earliest material of the legends was probably from two separate sources: a German and a Gothic, which were ultimately fused together. As to how the Attila of the present day in his own person is living up to his name we have no definite information, but as to how the German armies, in which all the Hohenzollern princes are officers, are scourging Europe, there is hourly evidence.

WHO IS BROWNING?

WE hear a great deal about the gun, but hardly anything about the man. That is as John Browning would have it. He is a quiet, diffident sort of man, between sixty and seventy years of age, who prefers to remain in the background while his guns take a foremost position in the world.

John Browning lives in Ogden, Utah, where he was born, and where he has performed practically all his wonders of gunmaking. His father before him was a gunsmith, and it was from him that the inventor learned the fundamental principles of the trade.

For many years Browning produced guns with which his name was not publically associated. Thus, he is the inventor of every rifle that the Winchester Arms Company has manufactured from the single-shot rifle to the repeater. He also invented the Remington shotgun, the Remington automatic rifle, and the Stevens repeating shotgun. The famous guns made by the Fabrique Nationale of Liège, Belgium, before the war, represented his labors and patents. All the Colt automatic pistols from .22 to .45 were the product of his genius, as well as the Colt machine gun.

But the supreme achievement of his career was the creation of the Browning machine guns, light and heavy types. To these he was willing to give his name. As almost every one knows, they are marvels of mechanical contrivance, and bid fair to revolutionize warfare. The light model, which is really a machine-gun rifle, is carried and fired from the shoulder as easily as an ordinary rifle. It will fire forty shots in two seconds and a half. The heavier, water-cooled machine gun is operated on a tripod, and can pour out bullets as fast as it is possible for them to follow one another. In a severe test it fired 39,000 shots without the least hitch or mishap.

Many ordnance authorities consider John Browning the greatest gun genius that ever lived. That his royalties pile up as high as a thousand dollars a day speaks for his success. Yet he is a lover of peace and concord, and we suspect that John Browning would willingly forego both his reputation and wealth if he could end war forever. In that, John Browning is the best type of the American.

THE LEFT-HANDED

IT has been as a rule customary to look on left-handed people as being handicapped by their peculiarity, the main reason for this being, probably, that the vast majority of people are right-handed. If anything is accomplished in an ambiguous way the procedure is often referred to as left-handed and what is called a left-handed compliment is one that in reality fails to compliment.

Yet left-handed men and women undoubtedly have their compensations. They are more nearly ambidextrous as a rule, without special effort, than most right-handed people who have tried to be so.

Left-handed archers and slingers frequently made good in a conspicuous way in the days when the bow and arrow and the sling were used as weapons in war. In the Book of Judges we are told that when the children of Israel went to war against Gibeah, among the Benjamites who went up to fight: "there were seven hundred men, left-handed: every one could sling at a hair's breadth and not miss."

Those who are left-handed can naturally use the right hand better than right-handed people can use the left hand. They write with the right hand and both hands are equally dextrous in many ways in which right-handed people can use the left hand but clumsily.

Why therefore should not right-handed people cultivate the ready use of the left hand? Some of the right-handed people who edit the copy in the offices of the big daily newspapers in writing the "heads" for the articles to be published learn to use the left hand, so as to rest the right, as they have to work very rapidly. Of late years also there is a movement in some trades to promote ambidextrousness among workers.

Why should not every one try to be ambidextrous? It is only the tyranny of custom that has kept the advantage from the right-handed people to a certain extent enjoyed without effort by those for whom they have a sort of good-natured pity at times; simply because they are not the same as the others; because they are left-handed.



POPULAR TOPICS

WHAT the war has cost in life and treasure to the world, and what it will bring to mankind in return is a question of infinite possibilities. Looking on both sides of the ledger results in a bittersweet which is a stimulant to the optimist and a depressant to the pessimist.



IN national wealth, the five greater Allies had, before the war, \$406,000,000,000; a sum four times as large as the national wealth of the two central powers, the latter having had approximately \$105,000,000,000; besides being so much more, the character of the wealth of the Allies is immensely more effective in its diversity of resource than that of their enemies.



THE money expended by the seven leading belligerents for war purposes only during four years has been estimated at about \$134,000,000,000—an amount far in excess of all the combined money expenditures for all wars since our Revolution. Reckoned on a four-year basis, the total average daily war cost is about \$107,500,000.



TOTAL losses in shipping to the Allies and neutrals up to August 1, 1918, are estimated at 15,000,000 tons, or about one-third of the world's 48,500,000 tons of pre-war shipping, a loss in money of \$1,050,000,000.



BUT the human losses are almost incalculable in what might have been achieved by those dead and disabled. Arithmetically speaking, the number of men lost in the four years of conflict was 8,509,000 killed, and 7,175,000 permanently wounded, or a total of 15,684,000. Economically speaking, in terms of money, society has been thus impoverished to the extent of \$45,000,000,000, according to the figures of Barriol, the celebrated actuary. Barriol gives the following as the capital value of man in the chief fighting countries: United States, \$4,100; Great Britain, \$4,140; Germany, \$3,380; France, \$2,900; Russia, \$2,020; Austria-Hungary, \$2,020.



IT is the moral effect, however, that gives one the more tragic pause, especially if one cannot see beyond the immediate sacrifice. Professor Pigou, in his thesis on "The Economy and Finance of the War," summarizes this dark phase as follows:

"Compared with what this war has cost and is costing in values outside the economic field—the shatterings of human promise, the accumulated suffering in wounds and disease of many who have gone to fight, the accumulated degradation in thought and

feeling of many who have remained at home—compared with these things, the economic cost is to my mind trivial and insignificant."



SO much for the black side of the ledger. What of the white side? It is still difficult to sum up the benefits of this terrible war. Yet we are seeing them clearer with each passing day. Up to date, perhaps the most important of them is the realignment and reapproachment of Capital and Labor. There is a sympathetic understanding between these opposites that would have seemed impossible prior to the war. Especially is this noteworthy in England, where the Labor Party has grown to unprecedented power.



AND here in the United States the government has formed the committee on labor, as a part of the council of national defense, with the objects:

(1) To advise in regard to the conservation and welfare of the workers in national industries, and

(2) To advise in regard to means of adjustment of employment problems without interruption of industry.

Which will probably become a permanent institution for the future welfare of both worker and employer.



OTHER assets of our national life have developed as if through the touch of a magician's wand: Greater efficiency in industry; better utilization of productive potentialities of both man and material; more nearly perfect business organizations; elimination of waste by coördination and coöperation; doing away with extravagances; the application of thrift and economy to every measure of our existence.



THESE sound big with promise. But in the gains caused by the war we must ever remember high in our computation the wonderful inventions that have leaped from the mind of man to defy the god of battles. Many of them are still secret, but now and then we get intimations of glorious fulfillment. Of course, the air plane has been one of the marvels. Another is aerial photography, which may prove invaluable in the engineering field in times of peace and reconstruction. The development of the internal combustion engine must be counted among the tremendous assets of the future. Perfection of chemical processes is a daily miracle. And the giant strides in medicine and surgery are hardly realized by the average man.



CHARITY and humaneness come within the record as items of beautiful merit. While the central powers apparently endeavor to cultivate cruelty and hardness of heart, the Allies seek to alleviate the distress and pain of all within the pale of the war's baneful influence. The United States alone has poured out millions for this cause.



ADD to all this that Adventure has come to puissant life in the hearts of men again, and they fare forth over the world in the spirit of Homer's "Odyssey." After the war, it is likely enough that these men, reawakened to the eternal lure of discovery and pioneering, will seek other worlds—perhaps Africa will be chosen as the coming commonwealth.



TO return to the present: As to man power, the Allies can, if necessary, command on the battlefield 88,000,000 effectives as against 26,000,000 effectives of the central powers, a proportion of about three to one.

The Vermiform Appendix

By O. F. Lewis

Author of "Little Goal-Getter," Etc.

As a writer of golf stories, Mr. Lewis is pretty near scratch, and threatens to beat all opponents. This is the third we have given you, and we think it is a corker. You need not know the game to enjoy it—it is so human.

HIS complete name was Thaddeus Murgatroyd Hopewell Jones. Through his young life, this galaxy of Christian and family appellations pursued him like a string of resounding cans appended to a canine tail.

Thaddeus was the kind of a young man of whom a philosopher might have said that about once in so often the divinity that shapes our ends enjoys a moment of grim humor. He was the kind of person of whom Nerissa might have said: "God made him, therefore let him pass for a man!" Or to him might have been applied that statement made of Cassius: "He hath a lean and hungry look. Such men are dangerous."

I don't want to be harsh, but simply veracious. Thaddeus M. H. Jones, when he first appeared in the ofing of the Wildwood Country Club, began immediately by putting not one foot but two whole feet into the situation thereby created. Thaddeus occurred for the first time at a critical moment of an important match. If you know about golf, and about getting into a fairly exclusive club like Wildwood, you will understand that after a fellow has been duly proposed and seconded, he waits a year or so, and then is notified that he must be presented to at least two of the board of governors. The process is a kind of technical once over, but it must precede being voted in.

Now Thaddeus Murgatroyd met us, accompanied by the long-suffering secretary of our club, at the seventeenth green on this particular Saturday afternoon, all ready and eager to receive the right hand of fellowship. But he had picked the worst of all possible times to arrive. We were at the

close of a tight match. Our foursome was on edge. We were not only, all of us, trying to qualify for the first sixteen in the annual club championship, but Prentiss, Fairchild, Parish and I had enough bets and cross bets on the match to justify the half-time employment of a bookkeeper.

And just then Thaddeus occurred. Prentiss, already from four to six down to all the rest of us, and with everything breaking against him since the ninth hole, was in no mood to dally with superfluities like T. M. H. Jones. On this seventeenth green he was having his first possible look-in since the beginning of the second nine. He had his head down, and was about to attempt to negotiate an eighteen-inch putt. Four players, four caddies, and our respected secretary were all desperately silent—the first rule in golf.

But, just as the aluminum head of the putter went slowly back, to come down deliberately upon the little white pellet, a high-pitched voice broke sharply the tense stillness:

"Do you know, Mr. Rivers, I have sometimes thought——"

Bing! The putted ball spurted six feet past the hole. Up jerked Prentiss' head toward the gross offender. He said some things not found in any school edition of a dictionary. Players, caddies, and our secretary all turned spontaneously toward the mortal who had cost Prentiss the hole, much real money, and a couple of additional strokes on his medal score.

And this is what we saw: At first, principally an enormous pair of tortoise-shell goggles. Then a thin gaunt face, with a nose liberal in length but sparse in width.

Then a long and rangy body. Behind the goggles were weak, blinking eyes. Under the nose was a weak mustache. Under the mustache was a weak smile. Thaddeus looked also rather weak in the leg joints. Altogether, not a triumphant entry!

"This is Mr. Thaddeus M. H. Jones, gentlemen. He is a candidate for admission, and desires to meet Mr. Prentiss and Mr. Fairchild." So spoke our secretary.

"I am truly delighted to meet you, gentlemen," spoke the apparition, with the effusiveness of a candidate making an impression.

Well, Prentiss *is* a gentleman, and so is Fairchild, so they shook hands and achieved a transitory smile. And then, if T. M. H. Jones had only functioned normally, and gone away, all might some time have been forgiven, though not forgot. But the creature insisted on staying and seeing the last hole played. He was keen to begin to learn golf.

In the short distance of one remaining hole he broke every rule of golf that a gallery ought to know. He jabbered away on the tee while we drove. He giggled when Prentiss, as a result, drove into the brook. He pulled an ecstatic exclamation at a horribly sliced ball of mine, because it made such a beautiful curve in the air. And all up the course he annotated his presence with gusts of appreciation, interlarded with fool questions about clubs and what one does next. You know. In short, he nearly spilled the match for all of us.

We succeeded in losing Thaddeus only at the door of the nineteenth hole, otherwise known as the café. There was a kind of plaintive, doglike look in the eyes of Thaddeus, as though he would have dearly liked to be asked in, but Prentiss had arrived at the limit of strain. So we said good day and entered, sat down, ordered our libations and gazed at each other.

"What two dod-gasted feeble-minded deficients of this club ever wished that impossibility on to us?" bellowed Prentiss, while checking up his 105. "The rottenest score I've made in three years! Eleven on the eighteenth!"

"You're too hard on the frail lad, Prentiss. Don't you recall that as he approached us, he said: 'I sometimes think?'" said Parish. Parish can see humor even at funerals.

"This is a golf club, and not a pest-

house!" growled Prentiss unappeased. He was now a bulldog, and Thaddeus was a rag, and he was shaking the rag for keeps.

"Don't you know who he is, Prentiss? Why, that's Dollie Jones' brother—all of him!" said our secretary nonchalantly.

Prentiss' jaw dropped, and, metaphorically, the rag dropped also. "That bunch of noise?"

We understood at once. It was club gossip that Prentiss was hard hit by the little imp of femininity who was our best woman player, and a sight for the gods on the links. And now this thirteenth plague of Egypt!

"You'll have to let him into the club, or lose out yourself, Prentiss, old dear," continued our worthy secretary. "You see, this biped under discussion is just home for good from college. If he's gotten under our skins in the distance of one hole of golf, think what he must be to his family! Here's the point. Jones, the father, gave a pile of money to this club some years ago, before you fellows joined. He held it together. We wouldn't have the course to-day if it hadn't been for him. His daughter is a prize for any club. Eh, Prentiss? But this lad is going to be our payment in full to the old man for all he did. We've got to make the kid a golfer—if we can, and clubable—if it's in him. That's the story in a nutshell. So run upstairs, you two fellows, and sign his papers, like little men!"

"In the human body," said Prentiss on an afternoon some three months later—as we were sitting around a table in the nineteenth hole—and absolutely apropos of nothing that had gone before, "is a worse than useless organ. It remains unknown and unfelt for years. To some lucky individuals it is forever unknown. But, suddenly and with acute pain, it may manifest itself. Its excruciating results are out of all proportion to its size. It attracts under such circumstances more attention than anything else in the human body. It is denominated the vermiform appendix."

We all stared at Prentiss. Fairchild held the dice box poised in mid-air. What in the world—

"In the Wildwood body, as distinguished from the human body, the name of the vermiform appendix is Thaddeus Murgatroyd Hopewell Jones! I am now considering whether slow assimilation by the Wildwood Club is possible, or whether a major

operation must ultimately occur. And if the latter, how it may be affected without killing the club. We must remember that the V. A.'s father holds a large mortgage on these premises and acres."

Thus was Thaddeus rechristened. The name stuck. In the short space of three months he had become worse, around the club, than a dozen Job's comforters. The worst of it was that no ordinary medicine would cure him. In any golf club there are, of course, a few members who don't belong, so to speak, but they don't ordinarily conduct a persistent offensive against the others. But whatever Thaddeus did was offensive.

As a result, our beloved Wildwood Club was having gradually forced upon it a social problem. This problem could not be blinked or suppressed. The constituent parts of the problem were acute adolescence, freshness, endurance, apparent megalomania, and shocking disregard and disrespect for those who were older than he was.

Thaddeus, like truth, was stranger than fiction. If any one had told us that Fate would thus wish on us a human poison ivy like Thaddeus, we would have laughed in the face of Fate. But Thaddeus occurred. His most characteristic act was to speak at all times what he regarded as the truth.

That was why old Jim Pillsbury, who could live with anybody, came to me one afternoon, looking like a caricature by Briggs of a man smashing his third club in a bunker, and said:

"Doc, I have a rapidly developing homicidal mania. What can I take for it?"

Since we were standing at the bar, I indicated to the white coat behind the rail the best temporary remedy, and asked Jim for his symptoms.

"Doc," said Pillsbury, "that T. M. H. Jones fellow asked me to play with him today. You know I'm easy. I played. But what did he do? He showed me fifty-seven different varieties of ways in which my game was wrong! And he's been playing only three months himself!"

"But he doesn't know a thing about the game himself!" I exclaimed.

"Course he doesn't, but he says that doesn't make any difference. If a thing's old, he says, it's probably wrong. History shows that when nations get too old, they die or something. You know the theoretical stuff of the colleges. He's bugs on it. He says that probably golf could be far better

played, in the end, if every club and every stroke we know now were chucked, and the problem were tackled anew. That's what he says *he* is going to do."

"What did you say to him?" I asked.

"I asked him if age, in his mind, had no authority. 'Not as age,' he said. 'I respect only brains,' he said. And so, honest to Moses, he kept picking on me so with his theories that I lost four balls, broke my best driver, and didn't speak to him after the fourteenth hole."

Now I have told this in some detail, because it is one of the scores of things that were beginning to be charged up against Thaddeus. You really wouldn't believe that such a person could happen, would you? Some time, he was absolutely sure to get our Wildwood Club by the ears.

Pointed remarks by irate members rolled off of him like bullets off a tank. Tell him, as blunt old Hiram Aldrich did, that he ought to be ashamed of himself for filling the nineteenth hole with his high-pitched voice, and low-pitched ideas, and he would open those goggled orbs of his, and look you square in the face, with badly creased forehead and elevated eyebrows.

"Old stuff," he would say. "Don't you men know that the world is about through kotowing to age? Why should individuality suppress itself, just because it isn't so old as it some time will be?"

I fell to studying Thaddeus. For all he was so belligerently obnoxious and outspoken, I thought I saw timidity and bravado shoot from the corner of his eye at times. He seemed to me not so much a pachydermous individual as a problem in psychology. Here was a youngster so utterly fresh and obnoxious that he seemed malignly shot into our club from some other world where manners and customs were different. He didn't respect anything! I found, by the way, that he had quite as little patience for himself as he had for others. In short, he was a constitutional objector to all peace and order at Wildwood.

Now this was before the days of the Russian revolution, but if we had known then of the Bolsheviks, we certainly would have called Thaddeus a Bolshevik-cuss, as Fairchild put it afterward.

As a doctor, it is a part of my job to study people who are not well. Thaddeus was not well, nor did any one wish him well. So, to gain light, I went finally to his sister

Dollie. This dainty little girl was the absolute opposite of Thaddeus. She could have walked over a corduroy road of human bodies at the Wildwood Club at any time. A dozen young fellows were waiting to be Sir Waiter Raleighs to her.

Dollie I had brought through a long attack of typhoid. She and I exchanged secrets. I'm old enough to be handy to the youngsters as an uncle confessor. Only, Thaddeus had never been inside my confessional, so I went to Dollie, as I said.

"Dollie," I said, "Thaddeus isn't taking exactly every trick just now at Wildwood. He's getting a lot of low cards, but thinks they are good tricks, though. Now, what is the matter with that boy, honestly? Perhaps, if I knew, I could avert a few things that seem to be shaping up pretty soon."

"Thaddeus," said Dollie, with worry wrinkling up her pretty face, "is an awfully good boy who's been disappointed in his own equipment, and in the breaks in life."

You can see already why I liked to talk with Dollie. She was a clever little diagnostician.

"Thad," she continued, "seems to have been born to blunder along. He's terribly sensitive. You see, in the first place, Thad is not handsome."

I had so seen, but I had kept the secret.

"In college Thad ran into awfully hard luck. The boys, somehow or other, elected him vice president during his freshman year. Soon after that, there was an awful fight between the freshmen and sophomores. The freshmen won, and they voted to give out the story to the papers. Thad volunteered to go into the city and to all the newspapers. But when he came back, the next morning, he found that three sophs had been expelled, and that the faculty was simply furious because the story was in the papers. Then the freshman class simply didn't stand back of Thad, and he was made the—the——"

"Goat," I assisted. Sympathy began to percolate into my cerebral processes.

"It was pretty nearly too much for Thad to bear, because for two nights upper classmen had to stay in his rooms, because lots of the other upper classmen didn't understand, and laid the expulsions to Thad's work. They were going to—to—— Well, dad went up there, and told him to stay, because he was the fourth or something Jones that had been to that college. I guess

you can understand what the boy went through that year!"

I could. Thad as the fourth-or-something Jones had probably had at first some hopes of leadership. And between leadership and the kind of abyss that Thad had fallen into was a mighty wide distance. The poor kid!

"Then again, Thad knew he was odd, and that made him odder. You see, doctor, the men—well, they've been awfully nice, and numerous, with me always, but the girls have never seemed to take to Thad. But, would you believe it, Thad has some awfully nice qualities! For instance, he writes lovely verse."

She shot a look at me, but I didn't explode.

"All full of aspiration, about strength and courage and conquest and—love!"

Another look at me.

"Please do what you can for Thad, doctor. He has said to me that he likes you. I'll tell you why he's acting so outrageously now. He is convinced that either he or the world is a misfit. He's decided deliberately that it's the world that's wrong. And I do want you to cure him."

"Dollie," I said very gravely, "I can't cure Thad, but I know who can. Some nice girl. What Thad wants is to be liked. He's aching to eat out of a female hand!"

"But what girl——" asked Dollie, before she thought of the implication.

"How about my little daughter Margaret?" I asked. "She's doing volunteer work with the Associated Charities now. Let her shift her charitable effort. Why not reconstruct a man instead of a family for a change?"

Dollie didn't say a word, but when she looked up at me, her eyes were moist. The problem of Thaddeus was emotional, as well as sociological, it was clear.

Well, that is the way that ultimately—but I mustn't get ahead of my story. My little Margaret was awfully decent about it. She was strong for sacrificial effort, like so many girls just out of college, and Thaddeus presented abnormally difficult features.

But her first report to me, a couple of weeks later, was almost sheepishly given.

"Daddie," she said, "I thought I had a problem, but I've only a case of mental nervous prostration."

"Meaning?" I said.

"Meaning that Thad—that is, Mr. Jones—is a lot nicer than a lot of men that aren't

crazy. He's as full of confessions and aspirations as a schoolgirl. I don't need to go into details about the first times I met him. Dollie looked out for that. But the third or fourth time was when he asked me to go of an afternoon in his runabout. We had a perfectly lovely run through northern Westchester County, and then Thad—oh, I've got to call him Thad to you, daddie—stopped where there was a rustic pagoda overlooking the watershed, up by Katohah, and we got out there and sat."

"The confessional?" I asked. Margaret nodded assent.

"Here's about what he said. 'I'm an ugly duckling in my family. I'm a natural blunderer. So I've decided to capitalize my blundering and make character out of it. You see, I don't coördinate. I know what I want to do, and then I do something else. I didn't intend to tell you anything about myself, and here I am spilling my stupid troubles before you. I want to dance, and I step on a gown. I talk to a girl, and in fifteen minutes I say something that sounds like thirty cents. I've been going on so long now that I just expect it. I wanted to break into the Wildwood Club modestly and unobtrusively, and I butted into an important foursome like a brass band. Do you think there's any hope for me?' he said."

"Did you give him any hope, Margaret?" I said quizzically.

"Perhaps!" There was a note in her voice that arrested my jollyng. I looked at her sharply.

"Stranger things have happened," said the minx roguishly, and she dropped a dainty curtsy as she rapidly left the room.

Father-in-law to a freak!

That was the dread possibility that took the joy out of life for me. Thaddeus as a medical or social problem was interesting, but Thaddeus as a family diet was impossible. And I had brought the thing on myself. If? But of course, it couldn't be! Margaret was simply doing what I asked her to, and having fun with her old father.

But, for all that, Thaddeus was changing rapidly. Prentiss came to me one day, and said:

"This fellow Murgatroyd Jones, or whatever his name is, is human! He's been doing all the dirty work in getting ready for our Red Cross day. He's working like a slave at all the things other members duck. Do you know, his three-quarters profile isn't

so bad. And he doesn't open his mouth to let out a peep. He hasn't emitted a revolutionary idea in ten days. Your daughter Margaret and he seem to hit it off finely in the Red Cross preparations, don't they?"

Bad news!

There was worse to come. Margaret was getting talked about. We had a Mrs. Rodney-Smith at the club who had the first word—if it was bad, and the last word—if it was good. She congratulated me one day on the interest Margaret was taking in the impossible Thaddeus. They were playing tennis daily. Then I knew I must step in.

"But, father," said Margaret, "don't you see that if he plays tennis, he isn't playing golf? And therefore he isn't picking on your poor abused members any longer? Besides, have you noticed how much handsomer he's getting?"

What could I do? The physician was getting his own medicine. All this led me to study Thaddeus more intensely. He was far worse looking than I had thought he was at first. The more I watched him, the worse he seemed to conduct himself. What in the world Margaret could see in him was beyond me!

They piled the misery on more thickly by winning a tennis tournament at Wildwood, thereby getting their photographs in the metropolitan dailies. "He looks like a war map of Europe," said some member on scanning the sporting page. Another member nudged him, and nodded toward me. The thing was certainly getting worse. And I had induced the situation myself, in order to relieve the club of Thaddeus.

He became very friendly with me. Having abandoned, apparently, his belligerency toward "age as such," he transformed it into attentiveness to me. Every time I saw him approach, I wondered in anxious suspense whether he was about to ask for Margaret's hand. I couldn't figure out how nature had made him look so little like a man, and so much like—— Well, I must have been askew myself, mentally, in those days I am describing, but later on, coals of fire were heaped on my head. And that's why I'm telling this tale. Now I can narrate in its proper perspective how Thaddeus found himself.

In a single afternoon Thaddeus Murgatroyd Hopewell Jones became transformed, at the Wildwood Club, from a now unob-

noxious and commonplace member to a noteworthy asset. He was more surprised than any one else after it had happened.

Pardon an elderly man for being emphatic, but, friends, it was *some* scrap! If you had seen Thad after it, rushing around like a newspaper in a tornado, disheveled, bloody-faced, goggleless, with ripped coat and a ripped other garment that is an indispensable part of a suit, hunting wildly for that German, to make him kiss the American flag and sing "America," you wouldn't have sold the experience for all the money there was on the Red Cross match that day.

But I am getting ahead of my story, which should be consecutive. The main points, preliminarily, are that we had entered the war that April. Secondly, there was a lot of talk, as you remember, about the draft that was coming in July. Besides being patriotic, I was delighted, for Thaddeus would be swept into it, and my life would be peaceful again.

With the advent of war, Thaddeus had developed into the club's champion exponent of immediate, ruthless, and devastating action by Yankee troops in France. We must have a million men over there in six months, or we were arrant cowards. And so forth. He began to fill up the nineteenth hole once more with arguments, but only about the war.

This was all the funnier, because I had it from Margaret, who now seemed to know everything about Thad, that Thad had gone through his entire boyhood without a fight. His father had promised him a licking at home for every fight he got into on the street, and so he grew up a kind of quitter. When Margaret broke him of his verbal belligerency and attacks on all traditions and "age as such," she also removed from him his pseudo courage. In short, Thad couldn't get over feeling that he had, physically, a yellow streak in him. Mentally, he was Class A in patriotism; physically, he was mighty worried.

But Thad's day came, and to the glory of America. This tournament I have mentioned occurred in June, 1917, at Wildwood. Of course Thad wasn't playing in it, but he was General Usefulness on that occasion. The two best amateur golfers in the United States were matched against the two best known professionals of the East, and the funds were to go to the Red Cross.

I came up just as the match was to start. There was a wonderful outpouring of spec-

tators. I hurried over to the first tee, but they weren't there! They were on the other side of the clubhouse, laughing, applauding, and massed around a central figure, which, as I approached, took on the appearance of Thaddeus!

He was auctioning off the caddie privileges for the match! That means that the individual who bid the highest sum, as each contestant was mentioned, might carry that player's clubs. A clever way to get money for the Red Cross.

I drew near with a sickening sensation. Thad was playing the fool again. But he wasn't. Within a minute he had me, as he had the entire throng. Such a combination of whimsical, serious, sparkling, tender, nonsensical auctioneering I have never heard. There that more-than-plain-faced lad stood, with his hand on the shoulder of each of these nationally known golfers, and in turn he pleaded, invited, cajoled, and won hundreds of dollars of good Red Cross money for the cause.

And, at the end, when he had announced the total of more than a thousand dollars, he broke spontaneously and modestly into a little poem about the boys that were so soon to go across the sea. It caught the gathering. The hush over us all was the more intense because Thad had evidently forgotten his own public situation. There were only a half dozen verses to the thing, but it was just the bit needed to make us all feel, as we were starting on this match, that the tag we were all wearing, as a gallery, meant dollars for the saving of lives and not just an admission ticket to a common match.

It gripped the gallery. There were cheers when Thad had finished, and then they surged over to the first tee to see the drives. Margaret found me in the crowd, and squeezed my arm.

"Some people said that it was crazy to put Thad up there to be auctioneer. But I was sure he'd win out. Dad, you were a dear to give me the chance to help make a real man of him." And then she disappeared in the gallery.

The match itself started out as a corker, and continued a neck-and-neck contest. There was fine spirit in both players and gallery. They were generous in their applause and their performances. The match bade fair to be one of the events in golfing history. Two young American-bred ama-

teurs, against two of the best professionals in the country!

And then, on the seventh fair green, an absolutely unprecedented event occurred. A fight broke out among the spectators. Imagine that, on a golf course! If anywhere in sport there is etiquette and manners, it is at an invitation match.

The thing happened not so far from where I was standing. Just as one of the players was about to approach the seventh green, there was a sharp yell, followed by shouts, more yells, and a sudden surge of the gallery toward the center of the disturbance.

The four contestants paused. From across the fairway came other spectators, running. It reminded me of the human stream that rushes toward a street accident. Meanwhile, the shouts continued.

My legs hurried me also in that direction, and, with a professional feeling that my services might be needed—and a desire to see what was happening—I arrived suddenly, through the crowd, at the edge of a deep sand trap. Around the trap, elevated considerably above the yawning gulf, men and women jostled and pushed each other. Women screamed. A dozen men were sliding down the sandy sides of the trap to the center.

And there, half buried in the sand, kicking, rolling over, thumping each other, were two humans. And, as I looked, one human, dirty almost beyond recognition, achieved the position that a rider enjoys upon a horse, and persistently thrust the other human's head into the sand. It was scandalous.

"Let 'em alone!" some one shouted in a stentorian voice. "Let the kid give the Dutchman his medicine! He insulted the flag, and tore it. Stand away!"

And then I recognized Thaddeus, for the second time in that afternoon. A generous stream of red fell from his nose upon the prostrate figure, whose head he with monotonous regularity was pushing into the sand. Wiser counsels of course prevailed, and strong, though applauding hands, pulled Thaddeus away from his victim. Then it was that, blinded almost with dirt and sand and blood, he rushed around like a baffled animal, and hunted for the man who had transformed him into a bear cat.

Well, in time something like order was restored, and the story of the affair got straightened out. It seems that Thaddeus, continuing to be useful, had willingly ac-

ceded to the request of the committee to keep the gallery from crowding too much upon the course. It is very important that the players should have room, and quiet also.

These assistants, who were to preserve order, were given little American flags as designations of authority. All went beautifully with Thad, until on the seventh fairway he gently tried to push a heavy-set individual back, who persisted in crowding forward.

This decidedly Teutonic-appearing person objected. He had decided where he would stand. Thad thought otherwise, and pointed out the danger, and also the fact that it would disconcert the players. No response.

Then Thad had said, smilingly still: "Everybody respects this emblem," and he held the little flag-stick horizontally, and began to push against the body of the stubborn individual.

"I don't give a damn for that, either!" said the latter, now thoroughly angry. With which, he seized the flag, and in the act it tore.

Then it was that Thaddeus went wild. All his arguments of the preceding months—all his patriotism—all his emotional reactions from the afternoon itself, the auction, the poem he had recited, welled up within him, and he smote the German mightily wherever he could smite.

Since this occurred just above our biggest and most yawning sand trap at Wildwood, it just naturally followed that both Thad and his antagonist rolled precipitously down the embankment, and into the deep dry sand in the center. Then followed what I have described.

As we half led, half dragged and half carried Thad back toward the locker house, a considerable group from the gallery followed us, or rather, Thad.

"Fine work, old sport!" they said. "That's the way to act! Beat those Dutchmen to it!" And so forth.

We put Thad, after achieving his disrobing, under the shower and gradually he emerged from the sand bath. His Berserker rage had died down, but in its place his under lip had pushed out—partly because it was greatly swollen, and partly because Thaddeus had come to a great decision.

As I stood by the shower, waiting for him to get clean enough for me to take a few

stitches, his voice bubbled forth from under the torrent, with a sonorousness heretofore missing:

"No draft for me! I enlist to-morrow. I've tasted German blood, and it tastes good. I'm going across for more!"

Well, Thaddeus went. Within twenty-four hours he had enlisted. Unknown to those stay-at-homes who had christened him V. A. for short, the boy hit out at the first chance offered for a ground school in aviation. The first most of the fellows at Wildwood knew of their loss was when Thad's name was posted on a red, white and blue bordered notice on our bulletin board, where we conspicuously posted all our members that were with the colors. It was interesting to watch the faces of the men when they looked at the board. Thad began to mean something more to them now than a verminform appendix, or a golf-club slavey.

You remember how little we heard, during that first year, of our boys after they disappeared into the camps. Wildwood had a fine custom—and still continues it—of posting all the newspaper clippings, personal letters, and the like, telling of our club members in the service. And so, once in a while, some squib about Thaddeus Murgatroyd appeared. He had made the ground-school course with flying colors. Then he was down in Texas.

My young Margaret aroused my suspicions. She was much quieter and soberer. Of course, after that fight in the trap, I liked Thaddeus somewhat better, but, after all, any red-blooded youngster would have had the same amount of sand. I don't mean any pun by that.

Then there came a morning when Margaret got a letter that made her shed a few tears at the breakfast table before she could prevent my seeing them.

"Thad's gone across," was all she said, and left the room suddenly.

Well, of course that told me a lot more than I was glad to know. Still, it was a long, long trail. I didn't want him killed, or even injured, but I did hope that time would work one of its alleged miracles. Then it suddenly occurred to me that charity and love are the same thing, according to holy writ, and I understood why Margaret had succumbed.

The months that followed brought to Wildwood no news of Thad. The occasional private letter to Margaret was not the kind,

evidently, to be posted on the patriotic bulletin at the clubhouse. But a day came when a front-page clipping was posted, the day of the annual club meeting, that was followed by a dance. And the clipping was all about Thad.

I hardly need to recall it to you. Do you remember the thrilling story of the young American aviator over there who, returning from over the Boche lines, was set upon by a German traveling circus of planes? Don't you recall the tale of that fight, and the three planes that the American dropped inside our lines, before the two Boche planes that were left succeeded in chasing him farther from our lines, till he fell like a streak, far inside the enemy's territory? That was Thad, our V. A., our generally useless and irritating member of former days.

Well, the newspaper clipping on the board that night must have been read by about everybody there at the meeting and dance. My little Margaret had planned of course to come, but she was in her room. Around the board stood men like Fairchild and Prentiss, and their words were pretty broken and a bit incoherent. You see, they were remembering that day on the seventeenth green, and the time they had turned Thad down cold at the door of the nineteenth hole. And now he had undoubtedly died for the rest of us, who were there dancing and drinking just as we had for more annual meetings than we cared to remember just then.

The casualty list reported him missing. But what the papers didn't report was that, as we learned several days later, that final dive from the sight of the Americans was a last feint to elude the Boche flyers, and that Thad, clever beyond all anticipation, had gained thereby the necessary few minutes to carry him sidewise far down the lines, and ultimately over the American lines, where he smashed gloriously into the top of a tree, and hung long enough in the broken branches and crippled rigging of the plane to be extricated before he dropped farther. In short, it was the closest of shaves.

Back they took Thad to a base hospital. Perhaps we at the club weren't a happy crowd when *that* clipping found its way to the board. But just why they should single me out, and congratulate me, was funny, wasn't it?

More than a year had passed since that Red Cross match, the auction, and the fight on the seventh green. The spring of 1918 brought Liberty Loans, thrift-stamp campaigns, and drives for Y. M. C. A., Knights of Columbus, and a dozen other fine charities at the front. Middle-aged man that I was, I ached to go across, but that couldn't be, so I did my bit in the country in several ways.

Then business took me to Washington. There I got a letter from Margaret on the second day, followed almost simultaneously by a telegram:

Come home at once. Very important.

MARGARET.

I was alarmed and took the night train. What could be the matter with the youngster? I didn't sleep much. When I reached New York, I telephoned to the house in Stratford. The maid answered. She knew of no trouble. What, then, was it all about? I asked her to notify Margaret to meet me on the nine-fifty at Stratford.

She did. She was radiant. "I won't say a thing, daddie, till we get to the club." Then I ought to have guessed, but I didn't. The war affairs in Washington were still in my brain.

But as the car rounded the clubhouse, I said, in surprise: "Why, what's all the crowd?"

And then the girl said: "Why, dad, it's the Red Cross tournament, just like a year ago. The same foursome. And something else the same, only different. Hurry over here!"

I hurried. There, in the center of the gayly dressed crowd, another auction was in progress. This time, however, it was evidently an officer that was auctioning the caddie privileges. I didn't get it even then.

"Oh, you *stupid!*" exclaimed Margaret, shaking my arm impatiently.

Then the officer turned toward me. It was Thaddeus. But how changed. Erect, sinewy, somewhat gaunt from the illness he had been through, but upstanding, he was truly a fine symbol of that great army of the democracy of the western world.

And he had the gallery again, as he had had them a year before. But this time he was not whimsical, or effervescent, or jocular. He was too near to the human maelstrom he had flown over and lived through. Pershing had sent him back to campaign for the bonds that must be sold, the men

and money that must be raised, and for such other purposes as the government designated, till he should get his full strength and the use of that arm that hung limp at his left side.

Again those golfers of national reputation stood by his side, as he auctioned the caddie privileges off. The gallery hung upon his words, and the four players were proud to stand beside him.

Well, the match began. Margaret held me by the arm, and led me to the boy, as soon as the crowd around him grew less. When he caught sight of me, he smiled the smile of a seasoned man.

And then, as we drew a bit apart from the throng, I saw unmistakable symptoms that both Margaret and Thad were about to say something important to me. So all I said was, before they could speak:

"Well, Margaret, if you've decided to make it a life job with Thad, I'm delighted."

That was simple, wasn't it? And they both understood so quickly, too!

I saw them a little later that morning. They were standing by that sand pit, into which Thad had rolled with the first Boche a year before. Thad was pointing downward and Margaret was laughing.

And up came Prentiss and Fairchild to me.

"Come over here," said Prentiss, and pulled me along toward Thad.

"Thaddeus Murgatroyd Hopewell Jones," he said solemnly to the astonished youth, "there was a time when I said bad words about you. The Lord has let me live long enough to have a chance to eat every one of them. The time of that eating will be to-night, at seven o'clock, in dining room B of the Wildwood Club. Your presence is indispensable. I have already heard from thirty-seven other members of this club that they expect to be there to help me eat. You are going to sit at my right, where you can witness the entire process. In short, every last one of the boys that I have seen wants to have the honor to sit with you. Or, in the words of holy writ, the rock that the builders rejected——"

"Stone," I said.

"Stone it is," said Prentiss. "The stone that the duffer builders rejected the same shall sit at the head of the table!"

Then, as Thaddeus turned a bit to answer Prentiss, I discovered that the three-quarters profile of Thad was distinctly good!

Doors of the Night

By Frank L. Packard

Author of "The Wire Devils," Etc.

III.—THE ALIBI

BILLY KANE'S eyes lifted from his plate and fixed in a curiously introspective way on Whitie Jack's handsome and unshaven face across the little table. Twenty-four hours! He was out in the open now—"convalescent." Twenty-four hours—and as far as Red Vallon and Birdie Rose were concerned specifically, and the underworld generally, there had been not a shred of success. He had unleashed the underworld, but the underworld had picked up neither thread nor clew; the underground clearing houses for stolen goods, the "fences," had yielded up no single one of the rubies belonging to the Ellsworth collection; the lead that he had given Birdie Rose in respect to Jackson, the dead footman, had, up to the present at least, proved abortive. Well, perhaps he, Billy Kane, would be more successful. The twenty-four hours had not been wholly fruitless.

Perhaps before the night was out there would be a different story to tell—perhaps a grim and ugly story. There was one clew which had developed, but a clew that was to be intrusted to neither Red Vallon nor Birdie Rose nor any of the pack. Even they, case-hardened, steeped in crime though they were, might balk at pushing that clew to its ultimate conclusion. They might weaken at the limit! He, Billy Kane, would not weaken, because, as between his own life and the life of one whom he was already satisfied was a murderer, he would not fling his own life away. His life was at stake. Red Vallon's wasn't. Birdie Rose's wasn't. It made a difference.

An attendant, in a dirty, beer-stained apron, sidled to the edge of the table. The man had been eager in his attentions, deferential, almost obsequious.

"Wot're youse for now, Bundy?" he inquired solicitously.

Billy Kane smiled as he shook his head and jerked his hand by way of invitation to-

ward Whitie Jack. He, Billy Kane, was the Rat, alias Bundy Morgan! He had never in his life before been in this none-too-reputable place run by one "Two-finger" Tasker, that combined at one and the same time a restaurant and dance hall of the lowest type, yet he found himself not only well known but an honored guest. He had known of the place by name and reputation; it was the sort of place that seemed naturally one the Rat would frequent, and he had told Red Vallon that he would eat here this evening. Red Vallon would have to make a report somewhere, and he, Billy Kane, had become none too sure of his own temporary quarters—that secret door, that underground passage into the Rat's lair had not proved an altogether unmixed blessing! There was the Woman in Black, who had been an uninvited, unwelcome, and almost sinister visitor on two occasions already; and there was, far more disturbing still, the matter of that ruby from the Ellsworth collection which had found its way mysteriously to the table in that room—the single stone from the collection that had come to light since the murder two nights ago.

Whitie Jack accepted the unspoken invitation.

"Gimme another mug of suds," he said.

The glass was replenished.

"You seem to have pulled a good job, Whitie," said Billy Kane approvingly. "The tenement is next to the café on the corner, eh? All right, I know the place. What next?"

Whitie Jack gulped down half the contents of his glass.

"I guess I did," he said complacently. "I wasn't pipin' de lay all day for nothin'—wot? De place has three floors, an' two flats on each floor, savvy? It ain't much of a place, neither. Peters' flat is on de second floor, on de right as youse go up. Dere's nobody at home, but he comes down dere himself to give de place de once over one

night a week. De family's away somewhere for a vacation, sniffin' in de ocean breezes at some boardin' house. Gee, say, de guy must have money to pull de highbrow, out-of-town-in-de-summer stuff for de family!"

Billy Kane nodded.

Whitie Jack finished his glass and drew his sleeve across his mouth.

"Two of de flats is vacant," he said. "One on de second floor, an' one on de top. De other one on de top over Peters' flat is where dat crazy old fiddler guy, Savnak, hangs out all by his lonesome. But Savnak won't bother youse none. He's out every night. He goes down to Dutchy Vetter's jewelry shop, an' him an' Dutchy, bein' nuts on music an' pinochle, dey goes to it for half de night. Old Savnak's got bats in his belfry, I guess; but I guess he can fiddle all right. I heard he used to be a big bug leadin' some foreign or-kestra, an' was a count or dook or something, an' den de dope got him, an' den he came out here. He ain't livin' like a dook now, an' I guess it takes him all his time to scratch up his rent. Bats, dat's wot he's got—bats an' dope. Dey got him to play one night down to Heeney's music hall, an' he went up in de air an' quit flat 'cause de waiters kept circulatin' around an' dishin' out de suds while he was playin'! Say, wot do youse know about dat! An' den——"

"Stick to cases, Whitie," interrupted Billy Kane patiently. "I'm expecting company in a few minutes. What about the ground floor. Who lives there?"

"Oh, dere!" said Whitie Jack somewhat contemptuously. "I dunno wot yer lay is, but dere's nothin' dere to bother youse neither. Dere's a couple of sisters about sixty years old apiece on one side, an' a young guy dat's just got married on de other."

"Back entrance?" inquired Billy Kane casually.

Whitie Jack shook his head.

"Nope!" he said. "Nothin' doin'! Dere's a back yard about four inches square, but the building behind butts right up against it, an' dere ain't no lane. But youse can get in de front door to-night whether it's locked or not, for dere ain't any street lamp near enough to do youse any harm."

"Good work!" said Billy Kane. He pushed his plate away from in front of him. "I guess you'd better beat it now, Whitie."

Whitie Jack, of the lesser breed of crim-

inal, self-attached familiar to the man he believed to be the Rat and an aristocrat of Crimeland, rose from his seat with evident reluctance. There was a sort of dog-like faithfulness and admiration in his eyes, the same deference in his manner that seemed to mark the dealings of every one in the underworld with the Rat; but the look on Whitie Jack's face was nevertheless one of undisguised disappointment.

"Ain't I in on dis any more?" he pleaded. "Ain't I got anything more to do?"

"Yes," said Billy Kane. He lowered his voice. "You've got more to do, and what will count for a lot more than you've already done—keep your mouth shut tight." He leaned across the table, and his hand closed in a friendly pressure on the other's arm. "Take the night off. Show up in the morning. Beat it now, Whitie."

Whitie Jack left the place. The waiter removed the dishes from the table. Billy Kane leaned back in his chair, and his eyes, the introspective stare back in their depths, traveled slowly over his surroundings. The tables, ranged around the sides of the room, were but sparsely occupied; the polished section of the floor in the center was deserted; it was too early for the votaries of the bunny-hug and the turkey-trot to start in on their nightly gyrations. Two-finger Tasker's was in a state of lethargy, as it were; a few hours later it would awake to a riot of hilarity and come into its own with a surging crowd and packed tables, but it was too early for that yet.

Billy Kane's fingers slipped mechanically into his vest pocket, and, hidden there, mechanically began to twirl a small, hard object, irregular in its shape, between their tips. His face hardened suddenly. The touch of that little object stirred up in an instant a grim flood of speculation. It was the ruby from the Ellsworth collection that he had found on his return to the Rat's den last night. It worried him. How had it got there? Who had put it there? And why? Above all, why?

Only a few hours before, turning his purloined authority to account, he had set the underworld the task of tracing the Ellsworth collection, and mysteriously there had appeared upon his table this single stone, ostentatiously identified by a piece cut from one of the original plush trays in which the stones had been kept. The bare possibility that it had been Red Vallon, or some of

his breed, who had stumbled upon the stone in their search through the underground exchanges, and had left it there as evidence of a partial success for him to find on his return, had occurred to him; but a cautious probing of Red Vallon that morning had put a final and emphatic negative on that theory.

Who, then? And why? It had seemed like a ghastly jeer when he had seen that stone there on the table, and the prelude to some sinister act that he could not foresee, and against which therefore he could not prepare any defense. Did some one know that he was not the Rat, that, desperate, with no other thing to do, he had snatched at the rôle Fate had thrust out to him, and was playing it now?

Who, then? Not the Woman in Black—her acceptance of him as the Rat had been altogether too genuine! Not the underworld—even a suspicion there would have been followed by a knife thrust long before this. Not the actual perpetrators of David Ellsworth's murder, if they knew him to be Billy Kane, for their one aim had been to fasten the crime irrevocably upon him, all their hellish ingenuity had been centered on that one object, and they would certainly, therefore, have lost no time in giving the police, in some roundabout, guarded way, a tip as to his identity.

His brain whirled with the problem and ached in an actual physical sense. It had been aching all day. He could minimize his peril, if he cared to make the wish father to the thought; he could not exaggerate it. It seemed impossible that his identity was known, but, even so, the question as to where that stone had come from, and why, still remained unanswered. Was it, then—another possibility—the murderers of David Ellsworth, who, while still believing him to be the Rat, and having discovered in some way that, as the Rat, he was working against them, had given him this ugly and significant warning to keep his hands off? Well, if that were so, he was still in no less danger, for he must go on. To turn aside was to fail, and to fail, quite equally, meant death.

The hard pressure of his lips curved the corners of his mouth downward in sharp lines. Nor was the question of that stone all! Since last night when the cloak of respectability had been stripped from Karlin, and "the man in the mask" had turned

the tables on the crime coterie in the gambling hell run by Jerry, the ex-croupier of Monte Carlo, the underworld had been in a nasty mood, ugly, suspicious, in a ferment of unrest. It was another alias added to his rôle, another alias to safeguard even more zealously, if possible, than his unsought rôle of the Rat. He was the man in the mask. He shrugged his shoulders suddenly. Quite so! The mask was even at that moment in his inside coat pocket. If it were found there! He laughed harshly. It seemed as though he were being sucked in nearer and nearer to the center of some seething vortex that hungrily sought to engulf him. It seemed as though his brain ground and mulled around in a sort of ghastly cycle. When he tried to bring one thing into individual outline some other thing impinged, and all became a jumbled medley, like pieces of a puzzle, no one of which would fit into the other.

The underworld looked askance and whispered through the corners of its mouth as it asked the question: Who was the man in the mask? And he, Billy Kane, who could answer that question, sitting here in Two-finger Tasker's in the heart of that underworld, was asking himself another, a dozen others, whose answers were vital, life and death to him in the most literal sense. Who was the Woman in Black, who, like a Nemesis, hovered over the Rat? Where was the man whose personality had been so strangely thrust upon him, Billy Kane? When would the Rat return? Had he, Billy Kane, even the few hours at his disposal this evening that were necessary to enable him to run down the clew which he had discovered, and upon which he was banking his all now to clear himself, to bring to justice the murderers who had so craftily saddled their guilt upon him—had he even that much time before the inevitable crash came?

This evening. Yes, this evening! His fingers came from his vest pocket, and his hand clenched fiercely at his side. He would go the limit. His mind was made up to that. He had never thought that he would consider, calculate and weigh the pros and cons of taking another's life, much less come to a deliberate decision to do so. But he had made that decision now; and, if it were necessary, he would carry it through. It seemed to affect him with an unnatural, cold indifference that surprised himself—that decision. It seemed to be only the re-

sult, the outcome that continued to concern him. If he had luck with him tonight he would win through. Red Vallon, Birdie Rose and the underworld had so far failed. He had kept prodding them on, now on the basis that he could not afford to let go of a single chance; but his hopes, that amounted now to a practical certainty of success, were almost wholly centered in his own efforts in the next few hours.

He stirred impulsively in his chair. The murderers of David Ellsworth had been *too* cunning, it seemed, had overstepped themselves at last in their anxiety to weave their net of evidence still more irrevocably around him. The affair of last night, the capture of Karlin by the police, and the social prominence of both Karlin and Merxler, had furnished the morning papers with material for glaring headlines and columns of sensational "story;" but, even so, all this had not by any means overshadowed the Ellsworth murder and robbery of the previous night. New York was still agog with the old millionaire-philanthropist's assassination, and with what it believed to be the traitorous and abandoned act of, not only a trusted and confidential secretary, but of one who at the same time was the son of a lifelong friend.

The blood surged burning hot into Billy Kane's face. From coast to coast they had heralded him as the vilest of his kind—he was a pariah, an outcast, a thing of loathing! Yes, the papers were still giving him and the Ellsworth murder prominence enough! But that prominence was not without its compensation, since it had furnished him with the clew now in his possession.

The inquest had been held late yesterday afternoon, too late for more than brief mention in the evening papers, but this morning the papers had carried a full and practically verbatim report of the proceedings. He had read the report, not daring at first to believe what he wanted to believe, afraid that his eyes were playing a mocking trick upon him—and then he had read it again in a sort of grim, unholy joy.

Jackson, the footman, whom he knew to be one of the murderers, was dead, and so far Birdie Rose had been unable to trace the man's family or connections; but Peters, the butler, was not dead, and out of Peters' own mouth, in his effort apparently to seal for all time his, Billy Kane's, guilt, Peters had convicted himself!

True, before a jury, Peters had done himself no harm—that was the hellish ingenuity of the scheme that fitted in with all the rest of the devil's craft with which the affair had been planned. Peters, in the public's eyes, or before any court, was treading on safe and solid ground, for his, Billy Kane's, simple denial was worth nothing in any man's opinion to-day; but he, Billy Kane, *knew* that Peters' testimony was not fact. Peters had testified that he had seen him, Billy Kane, leave the house about seven o'clock—which was true. Peters had then deliberately testified that half an hour later, though he had not seen Mr. Kane return, he had seen Mr. Kane come quietly down the back stairs, and enter the library—which, besides being untrue, since he, Billy Kane, was not even in the house at that time, was also equivalent to swearing away his, Billy Kane's life. Peters, continuing his evidence, stated that he was quite sure he had not been seen by Mr. Kane, as he, Peters, at that moment was standing just inside the cloakroom off the hall. He did not see Mr. Kane emerge again from the library, but some fifteen minutes later a telephone call came in for Mr. Ellsworth, and, knowing Mr. Ellsworth to be in the library, he connected with that room. He tried several times, but could get no reply. Finally he went to the library door and opened it, and found Mr. Ellsworth with his skull crushed in, dead upon the floor, the private vault and safe open and looted. He at once called the police. He stated that it was obvious that Mr. Kane had made his escape from the library through the stenographer's room at the rear, and from there to the back entrance, where, later on again, as the police already knew, returning once more in the hope of recovering the card with the combinations of the safe and vault on it in his handwriting, he had been discovered by Jackson, the footman, and had killed Jackson, who had tried to capture him.

Billy Kane's hands were shoved in an apparently nonchalant manner into the side pockets of his coat—to hide them from view. The nails were biting into the palms of his hands. "*Killed*"—that was the word Peters had used—"killed." It was very subtle of Peters to have used that word—it just clinched the whole story with the seemingly obvious. Everybody believed that he, Billy Kane, had killed Jackson, as well as David Ellsworth. Yes, Peters had

put the finishing touch on the evidence that was meant to free the actual perpetrators, himself quite evidently among them, from punishment, and to send him, Billy Kane, if caught, as their proxy to the death chair in Sing Sing.

Quite so! And Peters thought himself quite safe. What had Peters to fear from a hunted wretch whom he undoubtedly believed was miles away, fleeing for his life, cowering from the sight of his fellow humans, afraid to show his face? Only Peters and his accomplices had overshot the mark! The evidence was final, incontrovertible, damning—only it was not *true*. He, Billy Kane, would not dispute it with a jury—he would put Peters on a witness stand of a grimmer nature than that! He had known on the night of the crime that Jackson, the footman, was one of the guilty men; but he had not suspected that the dignified, perfectly trained Peters, the butler, with his fastidiously trimmed, gray, mutton-chop side whiskers, was likewise one of the band. And now he wondered why he had not thought of it.

He saw Peters in quite a different light now! A hundred little incidents metamorphosed the man's excessive efficiency and attentiveness into a smug mask of hypocrisy. And, corroborative from this new viewpoint, where, for instance, had Peters, as it now appeared, got the money to send his family away even to a boarding house? Butlers were not in the habit of sending their families away to the seaside for the summer! Even Whitie Jack had not failed to comment on that fact. Well, he was satisfied that he knew the real Peters now, and it was not too late. It was Peters, or himself now. It was his life, or Peters' life, unless Peters lay bare to the last shred the whole plot, and the name of every man connected with it.

And the stage was set. From the moment he had read the papers that morning, he had put Whitie Jack at work—and Whitie Jack had done well, exceedingly well. He, Billy Kane, knew that Peters was married and had a family, but he had not known Peters' home address. Whitie Jack had proved a most praiseworthy ferret. He, Billy Kane, knew that Thursday was always Peters' night off. This was Thursday night. Peters, then, if he followed his usual custom, would visit his flat to-night; and, since the man's family was away, Peters and

he would be *alone*. It was fortunate that the family was away, luck seemed to be turning; it precluded the necessity of getting Peters somewhere else, alone. It simplified matters. Peters' flat would serve most excellently for that interview.

He laughed a little now. He was strangely cool, strangely composed. He was in a mood in which he found difficulty in recognizing himself. He was going to-night to wring from a man either that man's life, or that man's confession. He was absolutely merciless in that resolve, he would not turn back, nothing would make him swerve one iota from that determination, he would go the limit—and yet he sat here entirely unmoved, callous.

Well, after all, why not? If the man was already a murderer, his life was already forfeit. If he, Billy Kane, must choose between losing his own life, and permitting one of the murderers of David Ellsworth to profit further thereby, would one hesitate long over that choice, or hesitate to go the limit? Would any man—

Billy Kane's hands came from his pockets, and he leisurely lighted a cigarette. Though sitting sideways to the door, he nevertheless unostentatiously commanded a full view of the entrance. Red Vallon had just entered, and, after a moment's pause in which the man's eyes searched around the dance hall, was coming forward, threading his way through the intervening tables. Billy Kane flung a short nod of recognition in the direction of the approaching gangster; and then his eyes fastened in a sort of hard, curious expectancy on the street door again. Whether or not it was intuition or premonition, induced by what had happened the previous night when Red Vallon had been followed, he did not know, but he was somehow prepared now, a little more than prepared; almost sure, in fact, that there would be a repetition of last night's occurrence.

Red Vallon dropped into the seat vacated by Whitie Jack.

"Hello, Bundy!" he greeted affably.

"Hello, Red!" The response was purely mechanical. Billy Kane shifted his cigarette from one corner of his mouth to the other to hide a smile in which there was no humor. His intuition, if it were intuition, had not been at fault. A woman had just entered the dance hall. He was not likely to mistake that slim, graceful figure, nor those dark, steady eyes that were spanning

the room and resting upon him. He could not see the lurking mockery in those eyes, the distance was a little too great for that, but his imagination could depict it readily enough. Nor did it require much imagination. It was the Woman in Black. He glanced at Red Vallon. Red Vallon's back was turned to the door, and he had quite evidently not observed her.

The beer-stained attendant hurried to the table.

"What'll you have, Red?" inquired Billy Kane pleasantly.

Red Vallon waved the man away.

"Nix!" he said in a lowered voice. "I got to beat it—I got to meet Birdie Rose. There's something doing."

Billy Kane, even as he watched that trim figure make its way to a table near the wall on a line with his own, leaned abruptly, eagerly forward toward Red Vallon. He felt his pulse throb and quicken. Luck seemed to be breaking wide open at last. If, coupled with his own clew, Red Vallon and Birdie Rose had unearthed another, this infernal masquerade that threatened his life at every turn was as good as ended.

"What is it?" he demanded sharply. "Have you spotted the stones?"

Red Vallon shook his head.

"Not them stones," he said a little uneasily. "Some others. I got orders."

Billy Kane's face hardened.

"Orders!" he echoed shortly. "Didn't I tell you last night that everything else was piker stuff? A half million in rubies, that's what we're after—to the limit! Understand? To the limit! Orders! Who gave you any orders except to stick to the game?"

"You know," said Red Vallon, and pushed a sheet of paper across the table. "Tear it up when you're through. It's no good to me any more. I just wanted to show it to you, so's you'd know I wasn't side-stepping on my own."

Billy Kane did not tear it up. His face, still set hard, showed no other signs of emotion, as his eyes studied the paper, but inwardly there came a sort of numbed dismay. It was a code message. It meant nothing to him in one sense, in another it meant a very great deal. He was *supposed* to know what this jumble of letters signified. Red Vallon expected him to know. To arouse Red Vallon's suspicion for an instant was simply and literally equivalent to bringing down the underworld upon him, and the underworld

would be as gentle and merciful as a pack of starving wolves! The jumble of letters seemed to possess a diabolical leer all their own, as he stared at them:

zidu6vesfu06f wefwj8dfsuofnIlohjtpdteop8
nbj30 fueob88ypuatsb7mmzpcz5bepun4psnbl9e
sfutnb14wbtopjubl1nspgoj3(iu)fm4p2ntjhc6jzb
lmbuo5bm2qpnu31hmf4iunih7jopuof17xufcu5i
hj3ieobh4ojold6pmd3peobu6sfwjeopjd9jqtat
pu4f4np3t0fopi4tm3f0v3sf4iufmp2npuisub3fe4
obf1b3nn5jjih2vdpqv.

Was it a code that, with the key in one's possession, one could read at a glance? He did not know. Was it a code that required elaborate and painstaking effort to decipher? He did not know. Did Red Vallon, sitting there across the table watching him, expect him to give instant indication that the code message was plain and intelligible to him? He did not know. There was only one course to take—the middle course. He laid the paper on the table, and laid his clenched fist over the paper, as he leaned farther over, truculently, toward Red Vallon.

"I tell you again that everything else is piker stuff," he said angrily. "Do you get me? What have you done, you and Birdie, and the rest? Have you got anywhere today? Do you know where that secretary guy, Billy Kane, is? Do you know where those rubies are?"

"No," said Red Vallon hurriedly, "we haven't turned anything up yet, but——"

"But you're going to by nosing around after something else!" snapped Billy Kane. "Do you think I'm going to see the biggest thing that was ever pulled slip through my fingers? If you do, you've got another think coming! Things have changed since I've been away—eh? How long since there's been any monkeying with what I dope out?"

"Don't get sore, Bundy," said Red Vallon appeasingly. "It's nothing like that. You know how it was. Karlin's arrest last night queered everything. That cursed snitch with the mask on put everything on the bum. There wasn't any meeting. You know who sent that code there; well, *he* didn't know about the other job, or that he was butting in on you. Tumble? There ain't nothing to be sore about, Bundy. Say, me and Birdie ain't going to be more'n an hour or two doing this trick, anyhow. Some one of the Mole's gang must have leaked; or maybe one of our boys piped him off. I dunno. But we got him cold this trip. He's a slick one all right, and he's been getting

away with the goods quite a lot lately, and giving us the laugh. You know all about that. Well, this is where he doesn't laugh—see? He's pulling a nice one to-night. Got it all fixed up to make it look like somebody else did it. Sure! Well, we're not kicking at that—so long as we get the loot. Sure! We'll let him pull it, all right, all right, believe me!"

Billy Kane appeared to be unmoved. He studied the gangster coldly.

"And how does it happen that you and Birdie, out of all the rest, are picked out for this?"

Red Vallon indulged in an ugly grin.

"'Cause we know the Mole down to the ground," he said; "but principally because the Mole knows *us*—there won't be any fooling when we spring a show-down, he's wise to that, and he'll come across. And, besides, t'ain't only Birdie and me, I'm taking some of my own gang along as well."

Billy Kane scowled. It probably mattered very little indeed that Red Vallon's efforts were to be sidetracked for the next few hours, and should he, Billy Kane, during that time, be successful, it mattered not at all; but his play for the moment was to preserve his rôle in Red Vallon's eyes, to keep away from anything intimate concerning the purport of this cipher message that still lay beneath his clenched hand, and that might so easily betray his ignorance, and above all now to get rid of Red Vallon before any such awkward and dangerous impasse could arise. He shrugged his shoulders, but his voice was still sullen as he spoke.

"Well, go to it!" he growled. "Go and pick up your chicken feed! But you get this into your nut, Red, and let it soak there. After this"—he leaned far over the table, his face thrust almost into Red Vallon's—"you stay with the game every minute, or quit! It's the limit, or quit! There's just one thing that counts—those rubies, or the man who pinched them. If we get the man, he'll cough—red—the stones, or blood. Do you think I'm going to let anything queer me on my share of half a million? You don't seem to get what I mean when I say the limit. Look out I don't give you an object lesson!"

Red Vallon licked his lips and drew back a little. There was something in Red Vallon's eyes that was not often there—fear.

"It's all right, Bundy," he said with nerv-

ous eagerness. "I'm with you. Sure, I am! This thing must have broke loose quick, and there wasn't no idea of crabbing anything you'd started. I got ten of the best of 'em combing out the fences for you right now."

"All right," responded Billy Kane gruffly. "Make a report to me on that before morning."

"Where'll you be?" Red Vallon was apparently relieved for his voice had recovered its buoyancy.

"At my place—some time," said Billy Kane curtly. "You can wait for me there." He smiled suddenly with grim facetiousness. "My shoulder's a lot better—enough so that maybe I can sit in for a hand myself to-night."

"I hope you do," said Red Vallon fervently. "You always had the knock-out punch, Bundy, and it'll seem like old times." He half rose from his chair; then, looking furtively about him, bent forward over the table. "There's something else, Bundy, before I go—that snitch last night at Jerry's, the man in the mask. He's played hell with the crowd. There's no telling what'll tumble down behind Karlin. And it don't look like he'd just stumbled on that deal by *accident*. It don't look good, Bundy. We got to get him, and get him quick, before he pulls anything more. The word's out to bump him off."

Billy Kane nodded.

"Well, don't lose your nerve over it, Red," he said coolly. "If it was by accident, he won't do us any more damage, and we've only got to settle with him for what he's done, providing we can ever find him; if it wasn't accident he'll show his hand again—won't he?"

"Yes," said Red Vallon.

Billy Kane's smile was unpleasant.

"Well, you'll know what to do with him then, won't you?" he inquired softly.

The gangster's red-rimmed eyes narrowed to slits.

"Yes, I'll know!" said Red Vallon coarsely. He made an ugly motion toward his throat. "Well, so long, Bundy!"

Billy Kane nodded again by way of answer. He watched Red Vallon thread his way back among the tables and pass out through the front door. With the gangster out of the way, he picked up the sheet of paper upon which the code message was written, studied it for a moment, then thrust it into his pocket—and his glance traveled

to the table opposite to him and against the wall, where that slim little figure in black was seated. She appeared to be quite indifferent to his presence, and quite intent upon the consumption of a glass of milk and the sandwich on the plate before her.

Billy Kane smiled with grim comprehension. The frugality of the meal was not without its object. It was fairly obvious that she could dispose of what was before her in short order, and leave the place at an instant's notice without inviting undesirable attention to an unfinished meal—if she so desired! It was his move. She had followed Red Vallon in, but she had not followed Red Vallon out—she was waiting for him, Billy Kane. The seat she had chosen had been in plain view of Red Vallon, therefore she was evidently free from any fear of recognition on the part of the gangster, and, as a logical corollary, from probably anybody else in the room. That she gave no sign now therefore could mean but one thing. It was his move. If he cared to cross swords with her here, he was at liberty to do so; if he had reasons of his own for preferring a less public meeting, he had only to leave the place—and she would undoubtedly follow.

In one sense she was most solicitous of his welfare! She would do nothing to hamper or hinder him in protecting himself, as long as he continued to double cross and render abortive the crimes of that inner circle of the underworld in which she believed him to be a leader; failing that, as she had already made it quite clear, she proposed, as near as he could solve the riddle, to expose some past crime of the Rat's to the police, and end his career via the death chair in Sing Sing. Also she had made her personal feelings toward him equally clear—she held for him a hatred that was as deep-seated as it was merciless and deadly.

He shrugged his shoulders. He, by proxy, stood in the shoes of one who, seemingly, had done her some irreparable wrong, and since she would dog him all night until she had had the interview that she evidently proposed to have, it might as well be here as anywhere. It mattered very little to him, as the Rat, that he should be observed by those in the room to get up from his table and walk over to hers. He was not being watched in the sense that any one held surveillance over him, and, in any case, the conventions here in the heart of the

underworld were of too elastic a character to have it cause even comment; and, besides, in a few hours from now, if luck were with him, he would be through with all this, done with this miserable rôle of supercrook, which, though it brought a new and greater peril at every move he made, was the one thing that, for the present, he was dependent upon for his life.

He rose, crossed the room nonchalantly, and dropped as nonchalantly into the chair at the end of her table, his back to the door.

She greeted him with a smile, but it was a smile of the lips only. The dark eyes, under the long lashes, studied him in a cold, uncompromising stare; and there was mockery in their depths, but deeper than the mockery there was contempt and disdain.

A cigarette, pulled lazily from his pocket and lighted, preserved his appearance of unconcern. In spite of himself, in spite of the fact that that contemptuous stare was his only through a damnable and abhorrent proxy, he felt suddenly ill at ease.

He had never seen her as closely as this before. He had only seen her twice before—once in the dark; and once with the width of the Rat's den separating them. He had been conscious then that she was attractive, beautiful, with her clustering masses of brown hair, and the dainty poise of her head, and the pure whiteness of her full throat; but he was conscious now that beyond the mere beauty of features lay steadfastness and strength, that in the sweetness of the face there was, too, a wistfulness, do what she would to hide it, and that there was strain there, and weariness. And he was suddenly conscious, too, that he disliked the rôle of the Rat more than he had ever disliked it, and that the loathing in those eyes, which never left his face, was responsible for this added distaste of the fact that nature had, through some cursed and perverted sense of humor or malevolence, seen fit to make him the counterpart of a wanton rogue, and, worse still, seen fit to force upon him the enactment of that rôle.

He could not tell her that he was not the Rat, could he?—that he was Billy Kane! Would the loathing in those eyes have grown the less at that? Billy Kane—the thief, the Judas assassin, whose name was a byword throughout the length and breadth of the land at that moment, whose name was a synonym for everything that was vile and hideous and depraved! He was the Rat—until to-night

was over! After that—well, after that, who knew? Now, he was the Rat, and he must play the Rat's part.

She broke the silence, her voice cool and even.

"I left it entirely to you as to whether you would come over to this table here or not."

"I quite understood." Billy Kane forced a sarcastic smile. "You are almost too considerate!"

"Am I?" she said. Her eyes flashed suddenly. "Well, perhaps you are right! I have thought sometimes that even the chance I give you is more than you deserve. I feel so strongly about it, in fact, that the only thing that prevents me from putting an end to it—and you—is that by using you to defeat the ends of your own criminal associates a great deal of good is being done. They will trap you some time, of course, and, knowing them, you know what will happen, and I am satisfied then that, as an alternative, you would prefer Sing Sing and the chair; but you are clever—that is why you grasp at the chance I give you. You are extremely clever—and you believe you can continue to outwit them indefinitely. I don't think you can, though I admit your cleverness, cunning and craft."

"You flatter me!" said Billy Kane ironically.

"No," she said, her voice suddenly lowered, passionate, tense; "I hate you."

"You told me that last night." Billy Kane indolently blew a ring of cigarette smoke ceilingward. "I am beginning to believe you. Did you follow Red Vallon in here to tell me the same thing again?"

She did not answer for a moment.

"Sometimes you make me lose my faith in God," she said, in a slow, strained way. "It is hard to believe that a God, a just God, could have created such men as you."

Billy Kane removed his cigarette from his lips, and flicked the ash away with a tap of his forefinger. He felt the color mount and tinge his cheeks. There was something, not alone in her words, but in her tone, that struck at him and hurt.

"Cut that out!" rasped Billy Kane.

"Yes," she said quietly, "I spoke impulsively. There are only two things in life that affect you—your own safety, and to be quite sure that you get all of your share out of your crimes, and, if possible, somebody else's share as well. But the latter consideration is at an end now, isn't it,

Bundy? I think I have taken care of that. It's just a question of whether you can save yourself or not with those clever wits of yours, Bundy. Well"—she shrugged her shoulders suddenly—"you did very well last night. His life would not be worth very much if the underworld should ever lay hands on the man in the mask. Would it, Bundy?"

He did not answer her.

"Yes, you did very well, indeed," she went on calmly. "You will meet somewhere else, of course, as soon as you can find a suitable place, but you will hold no more of your secret council meetings at Jerry's for some time to come."

Billy Kane's face was impassive now. He was apparently intent only on the thin blue spiral of smoke that curled upward from the tip of his cigarette. So those meetings of that cursed directorate of crime had been held at Jerry's, had they? He had not known that.

"Suppose," suggested Billy Kane curtly, "that we come to the point. What is it that you want to-night?"

"I am coming to the point," she answered levelly. "Owing to the events of last night your organization is in confusion, some of the more faint-hearted of your partners have temporarily even taken to their heels; but, even so, the organization's activities can hardly come to an abrupt standstill. You will perhaps remember a somewhat similar occasion once before? There are, perhaps, certain matters that are imperative, that cannot wait. Is it not so, Bundy? And in such an emergency it is left to—shall we call him the organization's secretary?—to keep things going. Personal touch is lost with one another, but there is still a way. I know, it does not matter how, that Red Vallon received a written order a little while ago. I followed Red Vallon here. I think he gave that order to you."

Billy Kane looked at her for a moment, a quizzical, whimsical expression creeping into his face. She was in deadly earnest, he knew that well. And yet there was a certain sense of humor here too—a grim humor with something of the sardonic in it, and nothing of mirth. Red Vallon's code order was quite as meaningless to him as it would be to her!

"Sure!" said Billy Kane, alias the Rat, and chuckled. "Sure, he gave it to me! You don't think I'd hold anything out on

you, do you? Sure, he gave it to me!" He tossed the paper across the table toward her. "Help yourself! All you've got to do is ask for anything *I've* got, and it's yours. You're as welcome as the sunshine to it."

She studied it for an instant calmly. Billy Kane, watching her narrowly, frowned slightly in a puzzled way. She appeared to be neither agitated nor confused. She raised her eyes to his, a glint, half of mockery, half of menace, in their brown depths.

"Did you think I did not know it was in cipher?" she inquired coldly. "You would hardly have been so obliging otherwise, would you? It is always in cipher under these circumstances, isn't it? Well, what is the translation?"

"Red Vallon didn't tell me," said Billy Kane complacently.

"Quite probably not!" she countered sharply. "It was hardly necessary, was it? But since you have decoded it yourself?"

Billy Kane shrugged his shoulders.

"I've been away so long," he said, "that I've forgotten the key."

"Really!" She was smiling at him in derision now. "In other words, you refuse to tell me what it is."

"Don't you think you expect a little too much from me?" He forced a sudden roughness into his tones. "I haven't decoded it yet, as a matter of fact; but if I had, do you think I'm looking for trouble—to give you the chance to force me into another mess?"

She shook her head in a sort of mocking tolerance.

"Does it really matter, Bundy?" she asked softly. "You are not as bright this evening as usual. I know that some crime is planned and set forth here on this paper. It really makes no vital difference to me to know beforehand specifically just what that crime is, for if it succeeds I shall know about it, and, in that case, I shall equally know that you did not prevent it. I think you quite understand what that means, don't you, Bundy? However"—she smiled again, as she opened her purse and took out a pencil—"let us put it down to a woman's insatiable curiosity, if you like, and decode it together."

Decode it! The twisted smile that came to his lips was genuine enough. He couldn't decode it. He had only one card to play—a flat and unequivocal refusal.

"Nothing doing!" he snarled.

"Oh, yes, I think there is," she said softly again.

He stared at her. Her pencil was flying across the paper. Who was this woman? She knew the key! Was there anything that she did not know? He watched her in a stunned way, his mind in confusion. And then he leaned forward to observe her work more closely. Beneath the original cipher she had written this:

ziduve sfuufw efwjfdls uofnohtjtpd teopnbje ofu cohtvpriu tshmmpe zbepu npsg nbesfntnb fwbi opjubnsgrgj fuu fmpn tj hojzlm b uobmq pu urh nfu uihjopu offxufc uihji eob fojo ldpmdp eob usfwje opjdjqtvt pu fnpt fop ftmt ovs fuu fmpn pu iusbf eob flbn nji ihvdp qv.

"It is so simple, Bundy," she murmured caustically. "The numerals to designate the number of letters in the words, the transposition of 'a' for 'b,' and so on, and the words spelled backward. It is so simple, Bundy, that it is strange you should have forgotten—and forgotten that there are other secrets I have found in that den of yours, apart from that very convenient and ingenious door!"

She was working as she spoke, paying no attention to him. He made no reply, only watched her as she set down a second series of letters:

yhtud rettev deviecer tneimgisnoc sdnomaid net dnasuht srallod yadot morf madretsma evah noitamrofni eht elom si gnuyal a tnalp ot teg meht thginot neewteb thgie dna enin kcolco dna trevid noicipsus ot emos eno esle nur eht elom ot htrae dna ekam mih hguoc pu.

A moment more, and she had written out the message in plain English:

Dutchy Vetter received consignment diamonds ten thousand dollars to-day from Amsterdam. Have information the Mole is laying a plant to get them to-night between eight and nine o'clock, and divert suspicion to some one else. Run the Mole to earth and make him cough up.

She was studying the paper in her hand. Billy Kane lighted another cigarette. He was still watching her, but it was in a detached sort of way. Between eight and nine o'clock! Peters was rarely able to leave the Ellsworth home on his evenings off until well after eight o'clock; Peters, therefore, would not reach his flat much before nine, and certainly was not likely to leave there again immediately.

Billy Kane's mind was working in quick, and seemingly unrelated, snatches of thought. There was time enough to see this

Vetter game through without interfering with that interview he meant to hold with Peters. It was strange that it should be Vetter. Whitie Jack had spoken of Vetter. Whitie Jack said that Savnak and Vetter spent most of their evenings together at Vetter's playing pinochle and the violin. Savnak would likely be there then between eight and nine. Upon whom was it that the so-called Mole intended to point suspicion? Here was the moral obligation again. He had fought that out last night. She, this woman here, was not the driving force. She only represented disaster from an entirely different source if he failed. If he stood aside with the foreknowledge of crime in his possession he was as guilty as this Mole. Perhaps he had been trying to trick his own conscience in not pressing Red Vallon for explanations. Perhaps, in a measure, he had allowed the argument that he might invite Red Vallon's suspicions to act as an excuse for evading the responsibility that this foreknowledge of crime entailed. Well, that responsibility was his now, thanks to her. He had no choice. It was likely to be the man in the mask again, and—

She pushed the paper toward him.

"Perhaps you would like to destroy this—for safety's sake," she observed composedly.

He took the paper mechanically, and mechanically tore it up.

"I do not know the Mole personally"—she was speaking almost more to herself than to him, as though feeling her way cautiously along a tortuous mental path—"I only know of him as an exceedingly clever scoundrel, and as the head of a small, but very select, band of criminals. He is a sort of competitor of yours, I believe, and more than once has had the temerity to act as a thorn in the side of your own rapacious and diabolical crime trust. But I do know that this Vetter is an honest old man. It would be too bad"—her voice, still low, was suddenly vibrant with a significance that there was no mistaking—"if Vetter should lose his diamonds, wouldn't it, Bundy?"

The spiral of cigarette smoke again occupied Billy Kane. It was quite true that his mind was already made up; but for the moment he was the Rat, and the Rat would not be likely to accede to her suggestion with any overwhelming degree of complacency!

"You are a little inconsistent, aren't

you?" he inquired sarcastically. "If you are so anxious to prevent this crime, why don't you warn the police?"

"You can put down my inconsistency to the frailty of my sex again, if you like," she answered quickly. "But you know quite well why. And, besides, one Bundy Morgan, having more at stake than the police, is more likely to accomplish the task successfully. Yes—Bundy?"

"But this isn't my hunt!" he protested, with a snarl. "I can't stop all the crime in the world! This isn't *my* crowd! I'm not responsible for the Mole. I don't know *his* plans. How can I put the crimp in them? The game is to let the Mole go ahead, isn't it, and then Red Vallon is to grab the chestnuts out of the Mole's pocket? Well, that's all right! But suppose I butt in, and, knowing nothing about the Mole's plans, fall down, and he gets away with the goods, and is too sharp for Red Vallon so that I can't even get the loot away from Red—am I responsible?"

"I'm not unreasonable," she said, and smiled. "There is a good deal of truth in what you say. But there is a way to provide against both contingencies."

The snarl was still in his voice.

"What is it?" he demanded.

"Steal the diamonds yourself before the Mole gets to work," she proposed calmly.

Billy Kane's gasp was wholly genuine.

"What?" he ejaculated.

"You've plenty of time," she said sweetly. "Vetter's isn't far from here, and it's not much more than half past seven now. The diamonds can be returned to Vetter tomorrow. After having had them stolen once, I think Vetter could be trusted to put them somewhere where neither the Mole nor any one else would be likely to succeed a second time."

"But I don't know where the diamonds are now!" His voice was helpless in spite of himself.

She lifted her shoulders.

"Neither do I," she said imperturbably.

"Well, you've got your nerve!" he burst out, and it was Billy Kane, not the Rat, who spoke.

The interview, as far as she was concerned, was evidently at an end. She had resumed her frugal meal, and was picking daintily at the sandwich on her plate. Her eyebrows arched.

"I hope you've got yours," she answered.

He stood up. . He could have laughed ironically, and likewise he could have sworn. She was distractingly pretty, as she sat there quite the mistress of herself; but her profound and utter disregard as to how the perilous project might result for him personally brought suddenly a vicious sweep of anger upon him—and abruptly, without a word, he swung from the table, and made his way toward the door. But the few steps cleared his brain a little, brought things into sharper focus. After all, he had forgotten! To her, he was the Rat. And the Rat—he did not question it—merited little of either mercy or consideration at her hands. At the door he looked back. She nodded to him pleasantly, and smiled, not in the manner of one who might very well be sending another to his death!

"Well, I'll be damned!" muttered Billy Kane, and, opening the door, stepped out to the street.

It was not far to Vetter's place; but—he looked at his watch under a street lamp—it was later than she had said. It was ten minutes of eight. He knew where Vetter's was. That point presented no difficulties; he could hardly have spent the months he had among the queer, heterogeneous lives of the East Side without knowing at least that much about so outstanding a character as the old Dutch diamond merchant, but that was quite another matter from knowing where the old Hollander domiciled his diamonds!

He went on at a quick pace, traversing block after block. He smiled ironically to himself as he finally turned a corner, and, with more caution now, approached a low frame building that was bordered by a dark and narrow lane. Yes, it was bizarre enough! He could not very well inform the police himself! The Rat—and particularly Billy Kane—was not at the moment on speaking terms with the police! But was it necessary to steal the diamonds?

Her idea, of course, was that then they would be absolutely safe from any attempt, or, perhaps what she feared most, physical coercion on the part of the Mole—even if Vetter were given a warning. But surely Vetter could take care of himself if he were warned!

He, Billy Kane, certainly preferred that method! But even that, as an alternative, was not quite as simple as it appeared. He was still the Rat. He did not know the

plan this so-called Mole had evolved, and, more vital still, he did not know how closely Red Vallon was, in turn, watching the Mole. It was eight o'clock now, and any or all of them might already be here. If he, Billy Kane, were discovered there would never be that little interview with Peters! The corollary was self-evident. Even for the purpose of warning the man, to reach Vetter inside this house here, that he was just passing, demanded the same degree of caution and secrecy on his part as though he entered for the purpose of stealing the stones himself. Also, the little shop that made the front of the building was closed and dark. Vetter's living quarters, he had heard, which was one of the eccentricities that had made the man a talked-of character in the East Side, consisted of no more than a single room, serving for every purpose, at the rear of the shop itself. He did not dare take the risk of inviting attention by rapping and bringing the old Hollander to the door.

He turned, and, retracing his steps, sauntered nonchalantly along, passed by the house again and slipped into the lane. Circumstances, as he found them, alone could govern his actions.

Billy Kane took stock now of his surroundings. The frame building was an old affair, and the floors therefore would be outrageously creaky. Billy Kane scowled. The prospect of creaky floors and protesting boards was not a pleasant one. And then the scowl vanished, and a smile flickered across his lips. From somewhere at the back of the house there came suddenly the throbbing notes of a violin. The smile broadened. That was Savnak, doubtless, and, for the moment at least, it was the violin, rather than pinocle, that was engaging the two men. Billy Kane was very much in favor of the violin. The violin would help a good deal, if it became a question of creaky floors!

He moved silently forward now farther into the lane, keeping close to the wall in the darker shadows of the house. The old Hollander and his crony were obviously in the back room. He glanced sharply up and down the length of the building. He could see nothing. It was intensely dark. The wall of the house was blank. There were no windows opening on the lane.

An expression, grimly quizzical, settled on his face. It was a queer setting for a robbery, this unpretentious, even tumble-down,

little shop, with its back-room living quarters! But the unpretentiousness of the old Hollander's surroundings in no way argued poverty. Kane had known of Vetter by reputation, quite apart even from any connection with the East Side. The man had a clientele among the best in the city. He was an authority on diamonds. He dealt only in the choicest stones, and he was absolutely reliable and honest. The world of fashion had made a path to Vetter's door, not he to theirs. In this ten-thousand-dollar consignment, for instance, there would probably not be more than fifty or sixty stones, not enough to make a small handful, but not one of them, probably, would be worth less than a hundred dollars, and most of them would be worth a great deal more.

Billy Kane reached the end of the building, and found that a board fence, some seven or eight feet high, continued on down the lane, obviously inclosing the back yard of the place. The violin throbbed on. The notes came clear and sweet, entirely unmuffled now, as though from an open window. He stood there for a moment listening. The playing was exquisite. It was some plaintive, haunting melody given life by a master touch. He remembered Whitie Jack's description of the expatriated musician. Without question, Savnak could "fiddle;" the man, in spite of having come a moral cropper, was, if he, Billy Kane, was any judge, little short of a genius.

Glancing sharply about him once more, Billy Kane, with a lithe spring, caught the top of the fence, and drew himself cautiously up until he could peer over. He hung there motionless for a moment. A few yards away from him, in a slightly diagonal direction, and between himself and the back door, was the window of the rear room; and, as he had suspected, the window was open. He could see inside; that is, in a restricted sense. A man, it was Savnak of course, chin on his violin, standing, was swaying gently to and fro on his feet to the tempo of the music, his back to the window; and at a table, side face to the window, but with his back toward Billy Kane, Vetter, the old Hollander, white-haired, sat rapt in attention, staring at the violinist.

Billy Kane drew himself farther up, and straddled the fence. The position of the two men rendered him safe from observation. The notes of the violin, in a tremolo, died softly away. The old Hollander dug

his knuckles across his eyes; and his words, spoken in perfect English, evidently the language common to the two men of diverse nationalities, reached Billy Kane distinctly.

"You are wonderful, my old friend Savnak. It is divine. My friend, you are wonderful."

The violinist shrugged his shoulders.

"Once," he said, "I could really play. Yes, I tell you, you who will believe me, that I could sway the people, that I could do with them as I would, that I——" He stopped abruptly, and shrugged his shoulders again. "But what is the use of memories? Memories! They are bad! They leave a bad taste! Let us forget them! You were to show me the great purchase that arrived to-day."

"These!" The old Hollander took from his pocket what looked like a soft, pliable, chamois-skin pocketbook, laid it on the table, opened it, disclosing a cluster of gems that, nesting on a snowy bed of wadding, sparkled and scintillated as the rays of the gas jet above the table fell upon them; and then, impulsively closing the pocketbook again, he pushed it a little away from him. "They can wait!" he said. "By and by, we will look at them one by one. But they do not feed the soul, my Savnak, like your music. Play some more. They are not worth one of your notes."

"Are they not?" Savnak's voice seemed tinged with bitterness. "The soul may be well fed, Vetter, but that does not keep one often enough from tightening the belt! I think I would be fortunate to make the exchange—my gift, such as it is, for your diamonds."

"You do not mean what you say!" the old Hollander replied, shaking his head reprovingly. "I know better! But I do not like to hear you talk like that. Things are not so bad with you now. You are moody. Play some more, my friend."

"As you will!" Again Savnak shrugged his shoulders. He nestled his chin on the violin. "It will be something gay, then, and lively—eh, Vetter?—to chase the blue devils away."

The notes of the violin rose again. Billy Kane began to lower himself from the fence into the back yard. His mind was made up now. Since there were two of them there, a warning surely was all that was necessary. The window was not much more than shoulder high from the ground, and he had,

then, only to cross the yard and call to Vetter through the window. His appearance there would no doubt startle and alarm the old Hollander half out of his wits, but that was exactly what would cause the man to guard his diamonds all the more zealously for the rest of the night. Once warned, the two men in there between them ought certainly to be able to take care of themselves and that chamois pocketbook.

Billy Kane dropped softly to the ground, straightened up, took a step forward, and stopped as though rooted to the spot. There had come a cry from Vetter. The violin broke off with a jerky, high-pitched, screaming note. Then silence. Billy Kane raised himself on tiptoes. He could just see in through the window; no more. It seemed like some picture flashed on a cinema screen, quick, instantaneous. A third man, hat drawn far over his face, was standing by the table, covering Vetter and Savnak with a revolver. The man snatched up the chamois pocketbook, reached above his head, turned out the gas—and the room and window were in blackness.

It had happened with the suddenness and swiftness of a lightning flash, so quick that the brain stumbled a little in a dazed way in an effort to grasp its significance. And then Billy Kane wrenched his automatic from his pocket. The thief must necessarily make his escape either by the front door, or by the back door and through the yard here. If it were the latter, which seemed the more likely, he, Billy Kane, had the man at his mercy; if it were the former, the man would probably reach the street, in any case, before he, Billy Kane, could get over the fence and rush down the lane.

Billy Kane was moving swiftly in the direction of the back door. He had to choose one way or the other. He could not attempt to guard both exits at the same time. If the man—

Vetter's voice rose in a furious cry from the room:

"It is by the front, Savnak, he has gone! Quick! I hear him going out! Quick! The street!"

"Yes! Quick! The street!" Savnak, like a parrot, in a shrill, hysterical voice, was echoing the other's words. "Quick! Chase him! And shout for the police!" A chair fell over. The two men were evidently floundering their way to the door. "Curse him for turning out that light!"

Billy Kane whirled, and dashed for the fence. As he straddled the top, he saw a figure, thrown into relief on the lighted street, speed past the head of the lane—and then, with a wry smile at a sudden realization of impotence, he dropped to the lane, and, instead of running now, made his way slowly and cautiously forward, hugged close against the wall. If he ran out of the lane into the arms of Vetter and Savnak, besides hampering the pursuit by distracting their attention from the fugitive, he invited the decidedly awkward and very natural suspicion of being connected with the thief himself, and the police would be very apt to listen with their tongues in their cheeks to any explanation that the Rat might offer to account for his presence in the lane at that particular moment. And if there was any one thing that he wished to avoid to-night, it was a complication with the police that would inevitably interfere with his freedom of action during the next few hours.

Came a wild cry now from both Vetter and Savnak from the front of the house; and then the two men, yelling at the top of their voices, both hatless, Savnak, apparently unconscious in his excitement that he was brandishing his violin frantically in one hand and his bow in the other, tore madly down the street in pursuit of their quarry.

Billy Kane slipped out to the street. Doors of tenements and houses were beginning to open; heads were beginning to be thrust out through upper windows; the street was beginning to assume a state of pandemonium. A block down, the quarry, well in the lead of the old Hollander and the violinist, leaped suddenly into a waiting automobile and vanished around the corner.

Billy Kane turned away. He felt a curiously chagrined resentment against this so-called Mole, that was quite apart from his angry resentment of the fact that the old Hollander had been victimized. He had expected something quite different from the Mole! Red Vallon—and she, too—had given the Mole a reputation for cleverness, craft and cunning; but, instead of having shown any cleverness, or even a shred of originality, the Mole, or his minion, had perpetrated nothing more than a bald, crude theft that any housebreaker, or broken-down old lag could have pulled off with equal lack of finesse. Well, anyway, for the moment,

as far as he was concerned, the affair was at an end, and he could only await developments. It all hinged on Red Vallon now—on Red Vallon, who proposed in turn to rob the robber—on Red Vallon, who, later on, would keep an appointment with him, Billy Kane, in the Rat's den!

As he turned a corner, Billy Kane consulted his watch. It was still early, just a trifle after eight—too early for that interview with Peters yet. He might as well go back to Two-finger Tasker's, then. It was scarcely likely that *she* was still there, but, if she were, so much the better! She could hardly hold him responsible for failure; and, in any case, she would realize that there was still the chance of recovering the stones by, in turn again, outwitting Red Vallon, if the gangster had been successful. If she were not there, Two-finger Tasker's was as good a place as any in which to put in the time.

He reached the dance hall, and found, as he had half expected, that she had already gone. He sat down at a table, ordered something from the waiter, and, apparently absorbed in the dancers, who had now begun to gather, he made a sort of grimly reassuring inventory of his equipment for the night's work that still lay ahead of him—his mask, his automatic, Whitie Jack's skeleton keys, were in his pockets. His lips twisted in a curious smile. The Mole, Vetter, the diamonds, the old violinist—all these seemed suddenly extraneous, incidents thrust upon him, dragged irrelevantly into his existence. They sank into inconsequential obtrusions in the face of the stake he was now about to play for his freedom, a clean name again, the end of this devil's tormenting masquerade, for his life or, perhaps, another man's life—Peters'!

Half an hour passed. He looked at his watch. A few minutes later he consulted it again. At a quarter to nine he rose from the table and left Two-finger Tasker's resort. Twenty minutes later, having satisfied himself that the immediate neighborhood was free of pedestrians for the moment, and that he had not been observed, he tried the street door of the tenement that had been the subject of Whitie Jack's earlier investigations. The door was unlocked, and he stepped silently into the vestibule, and closed the door softly behind him.

He stood for a moment listening, and taking critical note of his surroundings. A single incandescent burning here in the lower

hall supplied ample illumination. The stairs were directly in front of him, and on the right of the hallway. There was a closed door, also on the right and just at the foot of the stairs, and from behind this there came the murmur of voices. There was no other sound.

He moved quietly forward, mounted the stairs, gained the landing, and, with more caution now, turned back along the hall, making for the door on the right—Peters' door, according to Whitie Jack—that, if in the relative location as the one below, would be at the foot of the next flight of stairs. A faint light came up through the stair well, but the end of the hall itself beyond the second flight of stairs was in blackness. He nodded grimly in satisfaction. He would not need any light to find Peters' door!

His lips pressed hard together. He had reached the door now, and he crouched against it, his ear to the panel, listening intently. A sudden doubt came and tormented him and obsessed him. What, if by any chance Peters had some one with him! A bead of moisture oozed out on his forehead, and he brushed it hurriedly away. He was not so callous now! Behind that door lay, literally, life and death—behind that door, if it proved necessary, he meant to take a man's life, a miserable life, it was true, a murderer's life, a life that had no claim to mercy, but still a man's life. Had he ever laid claim to being callous? But that did not mean that his resolution was being undermined. The issue to-night was clearly defined, ultimate, final, and he had accepted that issue, and he would see it through. His lips relaxed a little in a smile of self-mockery. Well, suppose Peters were *not* alone, he, Billy Kane, had only to wait until the visitor conjured up by his doubts had gone.

He steadied himself with a mental effort. His nerves were getting a little too high strung. To begin with, there wasn't anybody in there with Peters. He would have heard voices if there had been, and he had heard none. He glanced around him now, but the act was wholly one of exaggerated caution. Here at the end of the hall he could see nothing. Opposite him was probably the door of the other apartment on this floor that Whitie Jack had said was unoccupied. There was no fear of interruption. He took his automatic from his pocket, tried the door cautiously, and, finding it locked,

knocked softly with his knuckles on the panel.

There was no response. He knocked again, a little louder, more insistently. There was still no response. Billy Kane was gnawing at his under lip now. Not only had Peters no visitor, but even Peters himself was not there! Out of the darkness it seemed as though a horde of mocking devils were suddenly jeering at him in unholy glee. He had somehow been very sure that everything to-night would go as he had planned, and, instead, there had been nothing so far but stark futility.

But the night was not ended yet! He thrust the automatic abruptly back into his pocket. There was still time for Peters to come. It was only a little after nine. And Peters would have a visitor after all—a visitor waiting there inside that room for him.

Billy Kane drew Whitie Jack's bunch of skeleton keys from his pocket, and, crouching now low down in front of the door, inserted one of the keys in the lock. It would not work. He tried another with the same result. He was not an adept at lock-picking as yet. He grinned without mirth at the mental reservation, and suddenly drew back from the door, retreating into the deeper blackness at the end of the hall. Here was Peters now, and Peters would have much less trouble in opening the door!

Footsteps were ascending the stairs. A figure, in the murky light from the stair well, gained the landing, and came forward along the hall. Billy Kane's sudden smile held little of humor. It was not Peters. It was Whitie Jack's tenant of the third floor, Savnak, the old violin player, hugging his violin case under his arm, and, as he came into the shadows, feeling out with his other hand for the banisters of the second flight of stairs. Fifteen feet away, flattened against the wall, himself secure from observation in the darkness, Billy Kane, in a sort of grim, philosophical resignation, watched what was now little more than a shadowy outline, as the other went on up the stairs to the third floor.

A door above slammed shut. Billy Kane returned to Peters' door. Again he tried a key, and still another and, with a low-breathed ejaculation of satisfaction, finally unlocked the door. He exchanged the keys for his automatic once more and then, his hand on the doorknob, he held tense and mo-

tionless, listening. From below there came again the sound of footsteps on the stairs. It was Peters at last, probably; but, if it was Peters, Peters was *not* alone. The footsteps of two men were on the stairs.

Futility again! The door was unlocked, but it availed him nothing at all now. He had meant to go in and wait for Peters, but it would be a fool play from any angle to go in there now if Peters had anybody with him. Nor was there time to lock the door again. He had returned the bunch of keys to his pocket, and it would take a moment to sort out the right one, and there was not that moment to spare. The footsteps were already on the landing. Billy Kane drew back once more silently and swiftly to the front of the hall. He was tight-lipped now. It seemed as though every turn of the luck had gone against him. Peters was certain to notice that the door was unlocked. What effect would that have on Peters? What would the man do, and—

Billy Kane was staring down the hall in a numbed, dazed way. Two men had come into the radius of light from the stair well, and were moving quickly along the hall in his direction. He brushed his hand across his eyes. That little horde of devils were at their jeers of unholy mirth again. Peters? There was no such man as Peters! Peters was a myth! The whole cursed night was a series of damnable hallucinations. This wasn't Peters—it was Red Vallon and Birdie Rose.

Out of the darkness he watched them, his mind fogged. What were they doing here? Why had they become suddenly so quiet and stealthy as they went up that second flight of stairs, where Savnak had gone? Savnak—Vetter—the diamonds—Red Vallon! He remembered the tribute paid to the Mole's cleverness, a tribute that, in his estimation as an eyewitness to the theft, had come far from being borne out in practice. Was there something that he had not seen, something behind that bald, crude scene which he had witnessed? His brain was stumbling on, groping, striving for understanding. He remembered the code message—the Mole was to divert suspicion to some one else. Had the Mole in some way outwitted Red Vallon? Birdie Rose and Red Vallon obviously believed that the old violinist had the diamonds—there was no other possible explanation to account for their presence here hard on Savnak's trail. And if that were

so, it would go hard with Savnak, very hard indeed, when, believing Savnak was lying, Red Vallon failed to secure the stones.

Billy Kane was creeping forward, and mounting the stairs step by step with infinite caution. They had disappeared now into Savnak's room; presumably. He had no choice, had he? The manhandling they would give Savnak would be little short of murder. Murder! His lips tightened. There was to have been murder in that room below there—wasn't there? But that was different—one man was guilty, the other innocent. Much as it meant to him to settle with Peters, he had no choice but to let that go to-night now, if necessary—to let it go, if necessary, until to-morrow, or until he could formulate some other plan, for it was not likely that he could frustrate Red Vallon now, and still be left quietly to return to a reckoning with Peters.

His fingers closed in a sudden spasmodic clutch over the stock of his automatic. He had passed Peters' door, and left it unlocked, and Peters might come in the meantime. Well, it didn't matter now. His own luck was out. The night had done nothing but toss him hither and thither like a shuttlecock in mockery and sport. And at the last fate had played him this most scurvy trick of all. He could not stand aside and see an innocent man left to the mercy of a devil like Red Vallon, and so, instead of playing Billy Kane to Peters, he was playing the man in the mask to Red Vallon and Birdie Rose! And that jeering horde ofimps out of the darkness were shrieking in his ears again!

He slid his mask over his face. He had reached the door over Peters' flat, which White Jack had described as Savnak's. Red Vallon had failed to close it tightly behind him—perhaps unwilling to risk the chance of any additional sound. It was slightly ajar. A dull glow of light, as though from an inner room, seeped through the aperture. Came a sharp, startled exclamation, and then Red Vallon's voice, snarling viciously:

"Come on! Come across! And come—quick!"

Billy Kane pushed the door open inch by inch and suddenly slipped into the room. He was quite safe, providing he made no noise that would betray his presence. Across from him, at an angle that kept him out of the line of light, was the open door of what

was obviously the front room of the apartment. Savnak had evidently been flung violently down into a chair; Birdie Rose's fingers were crooked, clawlike, within an inch of the violinist's throat; and Red Vallon, leaning on a table in front of the two, was leering at Savnak in ugly menace. Savnak was speaking, low and earnestly, but Billy Kane could not catch the man's words. Red Vallon interrupted the other with scant ceremony.

"Can that!" he snarled. "It don't go! That stage hand of yours ain't got the goods—you got 'em. We're wise to your game. We know you, Birdie and me, and you know we know it. How long you been cultivating the old Dutchman, and waiting for something worth while like to-night to break loose? Pinochle and a violin! Pretty nifty, that violin stunt! It helped a lot—we got in the same as that boob of yours did—while you was making enough noise fiddling to let an army in without being heard. Sure, you got a tricky nut on your shoulders, all right! It's too bad, though, you don't know enough not to stack up against a better crowd! And the guy turned out the gas to help him in his get-away, did he? Yes, he did—like hell! That's where he slipped you the sparklers, old bucko! Well, we've got your number, ain't we? We hung around after that to give you a chance to finish out the play. We're with you there! Nothing suits us better than to have the police chasing some guy they don't know, and that ain't got the white ones anyhow! Come on now, come across!"

Billy Kane, like a man bewildered, mentally stunned, stood there motionless. A singsong refrain repeated itself crazily over and over again in brain: "Savnak was the Mole! Savnak was the Mole!" He lifted his hand and swept it across his eyes. Savnak's face in there in that room was working in a sort of livid fury. Yes, of course—Savnak was the Mole. It was quite clear now, quite plain—and the Mole was not lacking quite so much after all in craft and cunning! So Red Vallon had been in there, too, had he? There came a sudden, grin set to Billy Kane's lips. Well, at least, the diamonds were *here* now!

Savnak was speaking again.

"Who put you wise to this?" he demanded sullenly.

"I dunno!" said the gangster indifferently. "I got orders, that's all. Maybe some of our

crowd piped you off making your play with Dutchy during the last month, and figured two and two made twenty-three—for you; or maybe one of your own bunch whispered out loud. I dunno! Are you coming across without getting hurt, or aren't you?"

Billy Kane was moving softly toward the inner door. Savnak had apparently regained his composure. He looked from one to another of his captors, and forced a smile.

"Look here," he said ingratiatingly, "we're all in this. Suppose we play fair. I'm willing to split."

"D'ye hear that, Birdie!" jeered Red Vallon, with a nasty laugh. "He wants a split! Well, give him one—maybe it'll help him to get a move on! Twist his pipes a little more—that's the sort of split he won't argue over!"

Birdie Rose's two hands closed with a quick, ugly jerk on Savnak's throat. There was a gurgling cry.

"Wait!" Savnak choked out. "Wait! It's—all right, boys." He rubbed his throat, as Birdie Rose released him. "I know when I'm beaten." He shrugged his shoulders in a sort of philosophically fatalistic way, and, reaching into his inside coat pocket, threw Vetter's chamois pocketbook down on the table.

"That's the stuff!" grunted Red Vallon maliciously. "But seeing it's you, we'll just take a look at it to make sure you're honest!" He picked up the pocketbook, opened it, nodded and chuckled over the gleaming array of diamonds, and closed the pocketbook again. "Well, I guess that'll be all for to-night, *Mister Savnak*, and——" His words ended in a sudden gasp.

Billy Kane was standing in the doorway, his automatic covering the men.

"Don't move, please, any of you!" Billy Kane's voice, gruffly unrecognizable, was facetiously debonair.

Birdie Rose's face had gone a pasty white; Savnak, hunched in his chair, stared helplessly; Red Vallon, his jaw dropped, still holding the pocketbook, found his voice.

"The man in the mask!" he mumbled.

"I was a little late for the lottery myself at Vetter's to-night," said Billy Kane coolly. "I understand you were all there. I only got as far as the back yard when the gathering broke up, and I was a little disappointed because I had a hunch that I held the winning number. However, if you,

there, with the pocketbook, whatever your name is, will just toss the prize over here, I'm willing to overlook any slight irregularity there might have been in the drawing."

Red Vallon did not answer.

The muzzle of Billy Kane's automatic lifted to a level with the gangster's eyes.

"Did you hear me?" The facetiousness was gone from Billy Kane now. His voice rasped suddenly. "*Toss it over!*"

With an oath, Red Vallon flung the pocketbook over the table.

Billy Kane caught it deftly with his left hand.

"Thank you!" said the man in the mask politely. He tucked the chamois case into his pocket, and reached out for the doorknob. "I think that is all—gentlemen," he said softly; "except to wish you—good night!"

In a flash he had shut the door upon them, and, turning, was running across the outer room. But Red Vallon, too, was quick. Before Billy Kane reached the door leading into the hall, he heard the window of the front room flung up and Red Vallon's voice:

"Quick, boys—come in! The man in the mask! Head him off! Jump for it! He's going downstairs!"

Billy Kane's jaws clamped hard, as he swung through the door to the head of the stairs. It was true! He remembered that Red Vallon had said he had some of his gang with him. He could hear them now. They were running into the lower hall; and, though he was taking the stairs three and four at a time, they would meet on the lower staircase, if he kept on. His escape was cut off. There was only one chance—Peters' door—it was unlocked—Peters' door, before Red Vallon above opened the door of Savnak's flat and saw him.

It had been a matter of seconds, no more; but seconds that had seemed of interminable duration. He was at the foot of the stairs now. Came the pound of approaching feet from below. Red Vallon, whether because he had not had time, or because he was wary of a trap, had not opened the door into the hall above yet. Billy Kane, cautious of any sound, slipped through the door into Peters' flat, half drew back in sudden dismay—then grimly closed the door behind him softly, and, working with desperate haste now, and still silently, took out his skeleton keys and locked it. He turned,

then, with his automatic flung out in front of him—and faced toward the door that opened on his left. He knew it, of course! But it had been too late to turn back. He was doubly trapped! His lips, thinned, curved in a bitter smile. If there was any murder to be done here in this flat to-night, it was likely now to be his own—not Peters! *There was a light in that room!* Peters must have come, in while he, Billy Kane, was upstairs. He was between two fires. A cry, any alarm given by Peters, would bring Red Vallon and his blood-fanged pack bursting through that door behind him. Was Peters deaf? True, he, Billy Kane, had slipped as silently through the door as he could, and had locked it as silently as he could, but he must have made some noise!

Feet raced by the hall, and went thumping up the stairs. It was strange that Peters had not heard him. It was stranger still that Peters did not hear the commotion now that Red Vallon's pack was making.

Billy Kane moved forward stealthily until he could see into the lighted room—and stood suddenly still. He felt the blood leave his face. He lifted his hand to his eyes in a queer, jerky, horrified motion, and then, with a low cry, he ran forward into the other room. The place was in confusion. It was a bedroom, and bureau drawers had been wrenched out and thrown around; every possible receptacle that might have concealed the smallest object had been ransacked and looted, and the contents strewn in wild disorder everywhere about—and on the floor a man lay, sprawled, dead, murdered, a brutal wound in the side of his head from a blow that had apparently fractured the skull.

He lapsed for a moment over the man. It was Peters. He rose, then, and stood there, fighting to rouse his brain from blunted torpor, to force it to resume its normal functions. Peters had been lying here dead, all the time that he, Billy Kane, had been waiting outside there in the hall. It must have taken quite a while for any one to accomplish this murder and ransack the room. Peters, therefore, must have left the Ellsworth house earlier than usual, since the murderer, allowing for the length of time he would have required for his work, must have completed it and made his escape before he, Billy Kane, had arrived here at nine o'clock. It was very strange, horribly strange—to

find Peters murdered! Who was it, who had done it? Who was it, other than himself, who could have had any motive? What did it mean? What was it that Peters had had here, that had been the object of such a frantic search? Billy Kane drew his breath in suddenly, sharply. What could it be save *one* thing! The Ellsworth rubies! That was it, wasn't it—*rubies!*

A sound from somewhere out in the hall brought surging back upon him a realization of his own imminent peril. There must be some way out, he must find a way. If he knew Red Vallon at all, he knew that he, Billy Kane, would never leave by the door. Well, a fire escape then, perhaps!

Quick now, every faculty alert, he ran noiselessly from room to room, and from window to window. He returned a moment later to the hall door, his face a little harder set and strained. There was no escape by the windows. There was nothing except an increasing sound of disturbance that seemed to be affecting all parts of the house. Nothing, save Red Vallon's voice just outside the door, talking, evidently, to some of his men:

"He ain't got out—and he ain't going to get out till we've searched every flat on the place! He's most likely on this floor, and Birdie and me'll tackle this door here first; but you go down there and tell those people below to shut up their row, and some of you look through their rooms. Beat it!"

Footsteps scurried away. The doorknob was tried. Billy Kane's lips were a thin line. There was no physical way of escape. Was there a way of wits? His wits against Red Vallon's! He stood there motionless, a queer, grim look creeping into his face, as the door now was shaken violently. And then, suddenly, he jerked his mask from his face, and thrust it into his pocket. Yes, there was a way, but a way that held a something of ghastly, abysmal irony in it. He could prove an alibi—he had a witness to it.

The door quivered, but held, under a crashing blow. Then Red Vallon's growling voice:

"Get out of the road, Birdie, and let me at it! I'll bust it in!"

And then Billy Kane spoke.

"Is that you, Red?" he demanded harshly.

There was a surprised gasp from the hall without, a second's tense silence, and then Red Vallon's voice again, heavy with perplexity and amazement:

"Who in hell are you?"

Billy Kane unlocked the door, flung it open, and stepped back. The hall had been lighted now, evidently to facilitate Red Vallon's search, and the light fell full upon Billy Kane through the doorway.

"The Rat!" The gangster's little red-rimmed eyes blinked helplessly, then suddenly narrowed. "What are you doing here?"

"You fool!" snarled Billy Kane angrily. "I thought I recognized your voice! You gave me a scare! What are *you* doing here? What's all this cursed noise about?"

"What's it about?" repeated Red Vallon mechanically. He spoke automatically, as though through force of habit at the Rat's command. "The Mole lives upstairs. He got those diamonds from Vetter; then Birdie and me took 'em from him, and not five minutes ago that blasted man in the mask turned the trick on us, and"—his voice changed with a jerk, and became suddenly truculent—"it's *damned* funny where he got to!"

"Come in here, both of you!" ordered Billy Kane peremptorily. "Come in here, and shut that door! Now"—as they obeyed him—"that's the story, is it, Red? Well, listen to mine!" His voice grew raucous, menacing, unpleasant. "This is the second time to-night you've run foul of my plans with your infernal diamonds and your piker hunts, and if trouble comes from this, look out for yourself! Five minutes ago, you said. Well, I wish he'd beamed you while he was at it! You've put an *hour's* work to the bad! How long do you think this disturbance is going on, before the police butt in? Take a look in that room, there!"

The two men took a step forward, and shrank suddenly back. Birdie Rose's face had gone gray. He looked wildly at Billy Kane.

"My Gawd!" whispered Red Vallon.

"I said something to you to-night about needing an object lesson, so that it would sink into you that when I said the limit I meant it," said Billy Kane evenly. "Well, you've got it now! Do you know who that man is?"

Red Vallon shook his head. Birdie Rose was nervously plucking at a package of cigarette papers that he had drawn from his pocket.

"His name is Peters," said Billy Kane curtly. "Peters was the butler at Ells-

worth's. Jackson's pal. Get me? I found this"—the ruby, from his vest pocket, was lying now in the open palm of Billy Kane's hand. "Do you understand what 'limit' means now, Red? I found this. He wouldn't talk, and so—" Billy Kane shrugged his shoulders coolly, and his hand jerked forward, pointing to the disordered room. "I hadn't found any more of them when you messed it up with your noise."

Red Vallon circled his lips with his tongue.

"Let's get out of here!" he said hoarsely.

"We'll have to now, thanks to you!" snapped Billy Kane shortly. "That's the only room that's been searched, and you've queered any chance of doing anything more now." He whirled impetuously on Red Vallon, and shook his fist in the gangster's face. "You see what you've done! Even if the police haven't got wise to the row, those people in the apartments downstairs will call them in the minute they get a chance. Yes, we've got to beat it! You and your diamonds are likely to give us a ride by the juice route up in that little armchair in Sing Sing. If your man gets away it's a small matter now. Anybody that's caught here will have to stand for *this*. You go first, Birdie, and call the crowd off, and scatter the minute you're outside the house. I don't want it published in the papers that I was with Peters in his expiring moments! Tumble? I can trust you two, because"—Billy Kane's smile was grewsome—"if anything leaks, I'll know *where* it leaked from? Get the idea? Now, beat it, Birdie! We'll give you a couple of minutes ahead of us."

The man went out. Billy Kane walked coolly to the door, took the skeleton key from the inside of the lock, and fitted it again to the outside.

"Come on, Red!" he said.

He locked the door, and put the bunch of keys in his pocket. It was comparatively quiet in the house now. A door of one of the lower apartments opened cautiously, but closed instantly again, as Billy Kane, with the gangster beside him, went down the stairs. In another moment they were out on the street, and had turned the first corner.

The gangster was muttering to himself:

"There's Birdie and me. But Savnak won't dare let a peep out of him, 'cause he was in on the diamond pinch himself. I'll

get that guy with the mask yet, if I swing for it. Spilled every blasted bean in the bag—that's me!" His voice took on a sudden, half-cringing, half-deferential note. "It wasn't my fault, Bundy—honest! You know that! You ain't sore, are you, Bundy?"

Billy Kane pushed his hat to the back of Rat.

The night air was cool, even crisp, but his hatband was wringing wet. He brushed his damp hair back from his forehead. It was strange that he should have murdered Peters, after all!

He answered gruffly.

"Forget it!" said Billy Kane, alias the

The next story in this series, "The Man with the Crutch," will appear in the November 7th issue of POPULAR.



PARDONABLE CURIOSITY

JOLIET, Illinois, is the home of the Illinois State penitentiary. Moreover, it is in Joliet that the famous old hotel, the Munroe House, stands, a landmark, a historical gem, the scene of past greatness. And, although the Munroe House is no Waldorf, it is frequented by many people because of its hallowed associations.

One night a comic-opera troupe filed into the Munroe, dropped a flock of grips on the floor and began to clamor for accommodations. Not so, however, with one little snub-nosed chorus girl.

"Gee!" she exclaimed contemptuously. "I don't like this dump. I'm going to a regular place."

The aged clerk behind the desk could not believe his ears.

"Young lady," he said sternly, "do you know what you are saying? Do you appreciate the fact that you are talking about the Munroe House, the hotel in which John P. Altgeld, the greatest governor this State ever had, came to the end of his life?"

The chorus girl paid no attention to this outburst.

"Furthermore," continued the clerk impressively, "do you realize that within these walls Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas held their first and historic debate on abolition?"

"Is that so?" the girl responded, at last overawed by the old fellow's tone. "And how did it come out?"



TUMULTY EXPLAINS THE SITUATION

THESE are the days when Joseph P. Tumulty, secretary to President Wilson, has his hands full of the hands of other men who greet him warmly and impart to him their earnest and flaming desires to give the chief magistrate of the nation advice and suggestions which will win the war overnight. These fellows come daily, swiftly, in battalions and brigades. Each one is all puffed up with the importance of what he wants to tell Mr. Wilson.

Of course, it is Tumulty's business to turn them away without offending them, for, if all of them were introduced to the president, they would take up his entire working time with advice and gossip.

"They are all in earnest," Tumulty explained one day. "They are sure they have solved all the great problems of the war at home and abroad. But it doesn't necessarily follow that their confidence is well placed. The fact that they have ideas and the assumption that their ideas are always valuable remind me of the logical, or illogical, processes of a little girl who was taken to the circus by her mother.

"This youngster was specially impressed by the Indians in the 'wild West' section. She stared at the feather headdress of the warriors. She kept on staring at them. The feathered adornments positively took her breath away. Finally, in an outburst of curiosity, she turned to her mother with the question:

"Mamma, do Indians lay eggs?"

Lowry of the Leathernecks

By Clarence L. Cullen

Author of "Record Overboard," Etc.

It is scarcely necessary to prepare you for how good this yarn is. Cullen is a consistent performer. But we want to tell you that this one of the doubly famous marines is going to tickle you

IT'S eight thousand miles, add or grab a bit, from California to Ireland," says Dan Devine to me on the night before the day his time was up. "I'll be paid off with eight hundred dollars. That's only ten cents a mile for me first trip home to Tralee in twenty years. It's not enough."

"It's a paltry per-mile expenditure for a fact," says I. "A top sergeant of marines, when he finishes an enlistment, ought never to go home at all barring he can cruise overland in a special car and travel by water in the steamer's bridal suite. If a leatherneck ain't entitled to all the luxuries of life, at ten dollars a mile, what right has John D. to enjoy them?"

"It's not the traveling only I'm thinking about, ye poor fish head," says Dan to that. "Ye'd have me walk into Tralee, I presume, with never a silly gift or token in me hands for whatever relatives, if any, I've still left there?"

"It's no fault of yours, of course," says I, "that your relatives, if any, in Tralee would scorn to accept, by way of token from a paid-off sea soldier, anything but concert-grand pianos and diamond-and-emerald dog collars. But I'd never walk into Tralee with such baubles in my hands, especially after dark, if what I've read about the Sinn Feiners is right."

"I'll not go at all," says Dan, heaving a sigh. "I'll see to it that I have a bigger pay day at the end of me next cruise. Then I can drop in upon me people in Tralee, if there's any of them alive, with two bits or so of loose money over and above me traveling outlay, and not be told I'm a tightwad."

If pipedown hadn't sounded just then I'd have said to my top-sergeant matey that, talking of tightwads, I'd never seen anybody in Ireland tossing money at the birdies like an intoxicated mariner, though I'd called there four times on board men-o'-war. But

I'd often mentioned that to Dan before, when passing a pleasant hour by picking on his native land, only to have him reply that a misfortunate clod of a Kansas-born corporal of marines with a mind messed up like a cowlick—all of that being me—could not be expected to understand the sensible and self-controlled natures of Irishmen.

So First Sergeant Devine, on the morning after he decided to give up this trip to his boyhood town of Tralee, stood by to be summoned aft by the paymaster to sign for his enlistment-end money.

"I'll reenlist to-day," says he to me, "leaving me eight hundred with the paymaster until the ship drops her mudhook off San Francisco, where I can blow the money more in accordance with the promptings of me depraved nature. Then I'll start laying up me pay again for the trip to Tralee when this next cruise is finished."

I was thinking up something pat and discouraging to say about these postponed trips to Tralee that men-o'-war's men are always going to make up to the hour when death overtakes them, when the gangway bos'n's mate massed all hands of us at the starboard rail by singing out the name of a ship that was just then rounding Diamond Head to slip into Honolulu harbor, where we'd been for four months. This incoming one was our sister ship, homeward bound from a three-year cruise on the China station, and she was only dropping into Honolulu for coal before pointing for San Francisco.

"I wonder if this George Lowry, the fiddle-scraping, ukulele-twiddling Britisher I've heard such an earful about, is still the top sergeant of that hooker's guard?" I heard Dan mutter as we watched the sister ship swing for the harbor entrance. I told him that if First Sergeant Lowry had left that ship I hadn't heard of it.

"What d'you mean—Britisher?" I added

to that. "If all of you that come from the British Isles ain't Britishers, what are you—Malays? And if Lowry ain't an Irish name, I suppose Devine is Swedish?"

"Irish me eye!" barked Dan. "There's nothing Irish about him barring his name—and it's a pagan Orangeman's name at that. I've never clapped an eye on this Lowry, but I've heard enough and to spare about him. If he's not a Johnny Bull, then I'm an Eskimo. Have ye ever come across him?"

"I have not," said I. "But I suppose it's all leatherneck gossip that he's one of the crack men of the noncommissioned corps. It's probable he knows nothing whatever about soldiering. I've heard that before he shipped as an American sea soldier he did a trick with the Royal Horse Artillery in India and later with the Cape Mounted Police, but those two outfits, as you know, spend all their time doing Honiton lacework and toasting marshmallows. It's likely that this Lowry, in less than a year after he took on with the American leathernecks, was made a first sergeant because it was discovered by his superior officers that he could play 'Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep' on the piccolo."

Dan glared at me when I finished uncoiling that.

"It's never me habit, as ye well know, ye Topeka tarantula," he rumbled, "to malign the competence of men of me own stripes and chevrons. I'm speaking of other things I've heard about this la-de-dah Lowry. Him an Irishman! Have ye ever seen or heard of a true-for-ye Irishman that would twang a Zulu zither, if that's the name for it? Or that would chirp swashy sentimental songs in Spanish, to say nothing of Chinese lullabies, while ripping off an accompaniment on a bumble-humming Kanaka guitar, and maybe at the same time, so far as I know, playing the dulcimer with his toes? Irish me elbow! The Irish have too much sense."

Just then the Jack-o'-the-Dust swung along and summoned Dan aft to the pay office to scribble a receipt for the money waiting there for him. As his corporal and matey I went with him to give him countenance while he signed his name. Three other cruise-end men, bluejackets, were there ahead of Dan, being paid off, and there was the usual delay while the pay yeoman dillydallied with the cruise enders' accounts and enlistment papers. But if it had not been for that delay Sergeant Daniel

Devine would have left his cruise savings with the paymaster and this yarn would have ended, before it began, at the pay-office door.

As it happened, after Dan and I, for three-quarters of an hour, had shifted from one leg to the other in the berth-deck alley, waiting for Dan's turn with the pen, we heard a little breeze of talk coming aft along that alley from the leathernecks' locker compartment on the port side, where we kept our gun-cleaning and pipe-claying gear in ditty-boxes. Following this, a first sergeant of marines that we'd never seen before stepped from this alcove into the berth-deck alley and peered aft in the dimness of it to see what he could see. He saw Dan and me hanging in the wind outside the pay-office door, and he grinned and came down the alley to greet us.

"That'll be George Lowry, or I'm a beachcomber," broke out Dan, more than loud enough for this advancing first sergeant of sea soldiers to hear him.

"Yes, I'm Lowry, and you're Dan Devine," said this trig man, holding out his hand.

So these two leathernecks, crack noncoms of the corps, after tracing spiders' webs over all the seven seas for cruise after cruise without ever before meeting, now shook hands for the first time and measured each other.

I've no way of telling what Devine thought of Lowry or Lowry of Devine. But I can tell you in two words what I, a corporal standing clear of the pair of them and in a position to judge, thought of Lowry after one look at him. Lowry was a sea soldier.

Trig, I've called him, because he had the look of a race horse that's ready to go for his life. There was a good deal of him, but his uniform fitted him everywhere as if it had been pasted on. His shoulders had the width of a ship's windlass, making his five-foot-ten seem less than that, but he tapered amidships as few men of forty do, and forty, you'd have judged, was his age. His frame gave you the idea that if you were to jab a finger into him anywhere it would be bruised at the end by striking something hard. He had one of those dark-muzzled, slow-smiling faces, shaved a day under the skin except for a black mustache that had a few crinkly wires of gray threading it. His eyes were as molten black as a Hindu's,

but there was a laugh in Lowry's which no Hindu's eyes ever had. If he'd had any trace of a brogue I'd have taken him at a look for a South of Ireland man who'd been away from there long enough to live it down. But he had no brogue, nor any English twist to his talk either. He talked, in a kept-down voice, like an American—the kind of American that sits ahead of you in the chair car, reading a book to pass the time.

"Ye've wasted no time boarding us, Lowry," said six-foot Dan, a good deal of a man himself, to this ship-visiting sea soldier who was now shaking hands with me.

"I left the ship in a sampan, two minutes after she anchored and before the steam cutter was free from the davits," said Lowry. "I'm paid off and quitting the service. I'll settle down in mufti here in Honolulu if I can find something to do."

Dan stared at him, then grinned.

"Paid off, is it?" said he. "We're a pair, then. Me own time is up to-day, and I'm aft here to sign for me cruise money."

"I hope you've a bigger pay day to show for your cruise than I'm carrying ashore," said Lowry. "I should have done better on the China station, where there's so few ways of spending. But eight hundred was the most I could lay up."

"Eight hundred!" broke out Dan. "We're a pair again, then, Lowry. Eight hundred, to a yen, is what I'm to sign for."

"That's queer, isn't it?" said Lowry with his slow grin. "Two top sergeants paid off the same day with no better than eight hundred apiece—a bookmaker would figure that out for you and lay big odds against the possibility of its happening. If each of us or one of us had sixteen hundred, now, it would be something like. Things could be done with sixteen hundred."

It was then I noticed a flush spreading over Dan's face and a glow deepening in his eyes. I knew these symptoms in that sea soldier. If Dan Devine wasn't born a gambler from the heart then I never saw a dice box.

"I'm thinking the same thing, now you mention it," said he, and, being close to him, I noticed he was panting slightly. "Sixteen hundred is money, but the half of it is only an aggravation. I'd been intending to take a furlough for me first trip to Ireland in twenty years. As it is, with only the eight hundred to me name, I'm reenlisting."

I observed then that, not to be outdone as

a quick breather, Lowry himself was taking in the air pretty fast, and his molten black eyes of a Hindu flared with the gambler's fire. It was a pair of them right enough!

"I'd been hoping, myself, to make the run home at the end of this cruise," said Lowry. "But you're right, Devine—a man would need more than eight hundred for such a trip. Now with twice eight hundred——"

The eyes of the top sergeants met. They grinned square in each other's faces. There was a sudden but perfect understanding between them.

"We'll cut the cards," said Dan.

"Now you're talking," said Lowry.

Just then the pay yeoman called Dan into the pay office.

"You're leaving your money on the ship's books, then?" the yeoman said to him.

"I am not," said Dan. "I'm drawing it now."

The yeoman looked astonished, as well he might have.

"But, man," he broke out, "no more than ten minutes ago I understood you to say that——"

"That I'd leave the eight hundred with the paymaster," Dan interrupted him. "So I did. But I've changed me mind. I've had a tip on the market—Tralee Preferred is the name of the stock—and I'll take me savings now."

Dan signed his name where he was told to, and the eight hundred in gold was in his pouch two minutes later. The pouch was a good match for the chamois bag, this one also stuffed with exactly eight hundred dollars in the pleasant-looking U. S. gold used by This Man's Navy, which Lowry brought into view when the three of us went for'ard to the leathernecks' locker alcove.

"I wonder," says Dan then, "does anybody happen to have a brand-new deck of cards? A deck," he adds with a flushed grin all round for the sea soldiers lounging on their ditty-boxes, "that'll have me lucky Tralee ace in a handy spot for me to cut it."

The men, sniffing uncommon proceedings with top sergeants for performers, sat straight and took notice. Lowry, himself flushed red over his blackamoor's sea bronze from excitement, shot Dan a swift look.

"So I've a Tralee man to beat?" said he. "Then I'll be needing all the luck Heaven may send."

"Heaven," rumbles Dan, still all a-grin, "has nothing to do with it, as ye well know."

"Tis the devil's delight we're engaging in, which is why, though I say it that shouldn't, 'tis such a sinfully ravishing transaction. Yes, I'm from old Tralee. Have ye the fresh deck, Jim?" he asks me.

I had found a deck still sealed in its wrapper in my ditty-box, and nodded.

"Then shuffle the Spook of Skibbereen out of it," orders Dan. Then another important detail occurred to him. "Somebody," he orders again, "go for'ard to the galley and ask Lu Ying, the skipper's cook, to come below here for a minute."

There was a short delay until the leatherneck who raced for the Chinaman reappeared in the alcove with him.

"Have ye the image on ye, Lu Ying?" Dan asked the cook.

Lu Ying, with his cagy chink grin, fumbled with the string around his neck, then pulled into view a joss god of jade about an inch long. He detached this from its string and handed it to Dan, who stuck it in the palm of his hand and squeezed it, muttering an incantation.

"'Tis heathenish, I grant ye, for a pillar of the church, like meself," says Dan by way of apology for this, "but me degradation is beyond repair, and the image has often stood by me. Are we all ready?"

A bit of a shining thing that Lowry had taken from his pocket to squeeze in the palm of his hand now flashed in the eyes of all of us when he held the hand out, palm open. There was little difference between the two images.

"The mate for yours, Devine," said Lowry, again closing his hand over his own jade joss. "Let the pair of them fight it out!"

"High wins and ace is high," said I, planting the shuffled deck on the ditty-box in front of me. "Who cuts first?"

"The older man, of course," says Dan, who's at least the other man's mate in years, and he thrust Lowry forward by the shoulders.

Lowry, with never a tremble of his big hand while making this cut for sixteen hundred and a long-hoped-for trip home, or nothing, dipped light into the deck and held up a five-spot.

The leathernecks in the alcove, all rooting, of course, for Dan their own top, gave a gasp of delight. Lowry poked his jade image back into his pocket and gave a tug or two at his crinkly mustache.

"Nine cards atop of me and three below," he murmured as if to himself, still smiling. "A three-to-one shot is nothing so hard to beat."

"Up anchor for Tralee!" Dan sang out, pulling back the sleeves of his blouse and pretending to spit in his hands. He dug deep and his card was a deuce.

The leathernecks in the alcove groaned in their misery. Dan grabbed the lingering Lu Ying, stuffed the Chinaman's jade image under the man's shirt, and lifted him bodily into the berth-deck alley.

"Back to your skillets, ye up-and-down-eyed pagan, before I blister ye alive!" Dan hissed at the Chinaman. But when he'd watched the skipper's cook take it on the run all the way up the alley Dan stepped back into the alcove, looking none the worse for his deuce.

"Easy come, easy go," said he, handing his pouch of gold to Lowry. "If a two-spot's the best Tralee can do for me in a pinch, then 'tis plain Tralee's not clamoring for a visit from me this cruise end."

Lowry, who'd been standing by as if waiting for the game to go on, pretended to look surprised when Dan handed him his money.

"Wait a bit," said he. "It's the best two cuts out of three, of course. I've only the one leg on you."

Lowry knew different, of course. It's always just the one cut, and no more, in the navy. But I'd made no mistake about that top sergeant of sea soldiers. He was a dead-game bird, and he felt sorry for Dan. So he was willing to give Dan another chance by pretending that the best two out of three was the card-cutting game he was used to.

But Dan knew that Lowry knew different. That, I suppose, is the reason he turned redder than ever.

"Whatever else I am, I'm no cry baby, me son," said he, gently pushing Lowry out of the alcove. "Ye'll serve a long trick as a sea soldier before ye'll ever meet up with a sobbing loser out of Tralee."

"I know, but I hate to strip a man," said Lowry, walking up the berth-deck alley with Dan and I following to see him over the side. Lowry's sampan was waiting for him at the gangway float.

"Why are ye quitting the corps after putting away all these years in it?" Dan asked him as we shook hands with him at the head of the gangway ladder. Lowry paused a minute before answering that.

"I'm a bit disappointed that we're keeping out of the war," he said then. "I may want to get into it later in some other service. So I don't want to tie myself up by reenlisting in the corps. I'll look about in Honolulu for a job and watch from here how the war goes."

"I suppose ye'll be telling me now that that one's Irish," says Dan to me after Lowry had gone over the side. "It's a British uniform he belongs in and he'll be wearing one inside of two months."

"More power to him, whatever uniform he wears," said I to that. "He's a miserable-looking scrub of a sea soldier, I suppose? And a noisy, crowing winner when he beats a cut of the cards?"

"I say nothing about him save that he's not Irish, ye cobra tongue," growled Dan. "Ye noticed, I presume, that when he said he'd been hoping to make home at his cruise end he was sharp enough not to name where this home was?"

"We can't all be from Tralee," said I. "Lowry, knowing that, hangs his head, I suppose, because he was born somewhere else in the British Isles. He'll be making up for that misfortune in a few minutes by buying a cartload of Kanaka taro-patch fiddles, made on the Honolulu premises, with your money."

Two days later, after morning messgear, Dan and I went ashore in Honolulu, for a day's drive around the island of Oahu in a wheezy old catamaran of a car I'd picked up at an auction bargain. After rattling first, me driving, down to Pearl Harbor and return we made the climb back of the Punchbowl for a whirl on the road overlooking the Nuuanu Valley. At the high point of the path that winds above the Nuuanu Gorge I stopped the crazy old car that we might enjoy this view with some peace of our lives.

It was then that we heard, from somewhere among the boulders above us, the tune "Come Back to Erin" being played very sweet and sentimental on some mellow, deep-toned wind instrument that neither of us could identify from the sound. The boulder-hidden player was somebody who knew how, and Dan reveled in the music like a dog on a rug before a grate fire.

"'Tis strange to hear that fine Irish tune atop of a mountain down here in the middle of the Pacific," said he, huddling deep

in his seat to listen. "But the Irish, more power to them, will be found in every quarter of the world where men ought to be. No doubt that man playing out his heart there among the rocks is some lonesome Irishman longing for a sight of the Auld Dart. 'Tis meself that knows how he feels! I'm not so young as I was, and often of late I find meself twisting in me hammock and thinking of Tralee."

The tune came to an end while Dan was speaking and the player, after a brief pause, struck into another one. Dan listened to three bars of this air. Then he stiffened in his seat. Three more bars of the tune drifted down from among the boulders. Then Dan leaped to his feet in the car, his face the color of a fireman's shirt, and shook both of his buckled-up fists at the rocks above us.

"I'll punch the eye of that rogue of the world, whoever he is, if it's the last act of me life!" he exploded.

That second tune that drifted down from the rocks was "The Battle of the Boyne."

The player must have heard Dan's remark. It could have been heard, I think, on Mauna Loa, far off on the main island of Hawaii. Anyhow the Boyne Water tune came to an abrupt end, and ten seconds later a man wearing a good-looking suit of civilian's clothes and a tweed cap on one ear came scrambling down the rocks. It was Lowry, with a big saxophone tucked under his arm. He grinned at the pair of us, with his gray-threaded black mustache crinkling over his white teeth.

"Hello, leathernecks," says he, cheerful as a katydid. "It's good to see the sea-soldier cap again. Touring, eh?"

"Ye played that pagan scullions' tune to taunt me, mucker that ye are," was Dan's hoarse reply to this greeting. Lowry flushed a bit, then laughed.

"No I didn't," said he. "It's the Boyne Water you're meaning, isn't it? It just popped into my head. I didn't know you were on the island, Devine."

Dan rumbled something in his throat that he'd never heard at Sunday school.

"It's the first chance I've had to find if I could do anything with this instrument," Lowry went on, twiddling the keys of the big pipe. "It's the first saxophone I ever had. They're expensive. This one cost me a hundred dollars secondhand." He

laughed again and stole a kind of sheepish look at Dan, who scowled back at him. "I'm glad I bought something anyhow out of the sixteen hundred," he said then. "The saxophone and this suit of duds I'm wearing are all I've got to show for the money. But I've found a job in a music shop and start to work in the morning."

Dan, still sore as a butcher over the Boyne Water, disdained to ask Lowry what had become of the rest of the cruise savings of two top sergeants. But I didn't.

"So you let them trim you at poker, did you?" I asked him.

"Not poker," replied Lowry with his slow smile. "Fan-tan. I thought I'd learned all there was to know about fan-tan on this last China cruise. So I dropped into the Chinese quarter here to give the poor fan-tan tyros of Honolulu the benefit of my knowledge of the game in exchange for their money. It took those Chinamen nearly an hour and a quarter to get my fourteen hundred, which was all I had on me."

"It serves ye right, ye dolt of the globe!" Dan roared at him. "I never minded losing me own money till now. But to think of me scrimping and saving to lose it by a cut of the cards to a Boyne Water tooting sassenach that turns around and drops it into the shirts of a pack of heathen Chinamen!" Dan choked with the rage in him when he got this far, but he made a quick recovery and shook a big freckled fist up at Lowry. "Come down out of that," he belted at him, "and I'll give ye the licking of your life, ye chuckle-headed cockroach!"

Lowry, his face suddenly sobering, laid his saxophone beside him, stood up from the rock he'd been sitting on, and started to peel his coat.

"Well, if that's the way you feel about it, old sea horse," he said in his quiet way, "I'd hate to disoblige," and, in his shirt sleeves, he scrambled down into the road.

"That's how I feel about it, me man," rumbled Dan, stripping off his blouse before he stepped from the car. "And, before I make ye look like something that'll draw a laugh at your music shop, I'll inform ye that Lowrys were me meat from the first years of me life. I began early on Lowrys. When I was no more than ten, back in Tralee, I licked the liver and lights out of a Lowry of the same age for being a Protestant. Now, thirty years later, on top of a Kanaka mountain, I'll have the satisfaction of doing

the same by another Lowry for tooting the Orangemen's hymn in me teeth and then telling me he's chucked me cruise savings into the paws of a crew of slant-eyed heathens!"

They were in the middle of the Nuuanu Gorge road, ready to square off at each other, when Dan was getting this out of his system. I was watching Lowry's face while Dan's roaring proceeded. It was calm and set enough at the beginning of Dan's harangue. But suddenly Lowry brought his eyelids together until the big black eyes were only slits and stared at the Lowry killer in front of him as if he'd never seen him before in his life.

Then came the most startling finish of a fight that hadn't yet begun that ever I saw ashore or afloat. Lowry broke into one shriek of laughter after another. He sat down in the middle of the road and laughed like a hyena. He rolled in the dust of the road and laughed till the tears ran out of his eyes. I never heard a man laugh so. He laughed till I was afraid he'd be sick.

Dan glowered down in amazement at this laughing Lowry.

"Get up, ye fool," he growled in his throat, "and ye'll laugh on the other side of your mouth."

Lowry peered up at Dan out of his streaming eyes. Then he rolled over on his stomach in the middle of the road and laughed again till I thought he'd gone clean daft.

Just then a motor horn tooted back of me, and I had to move my rattletybang old bus out of the middle of the narrow road for the big car coming to pass. Lowry, still laughing, got up to make room for this car, he and Dan stepping to the edge of the road.

The middle-aged man at the wheel of this car pulled up when he got abreast of us. He was gnawing an unlit cigar and looked excited.

"Service men, I see," said he, glancing at the uniforms of Dan and myself. "Have you heard the news?"

That straightened us. We were waiting for a bit of news. This was about ten o'clock of an April morning in nineteen-seventeen in Honolulu, which would make the time in Washington about six or seven o'clock in the evening of the same day.

"We're in the war at last, are we?" I asked this excited-looking man in the car. He nodded.

"They got the cable flash back in town a few minutes ago," said he. "Congress declared war to-day."

He drove on. Dan came back to the car and put on his coat. Lowry clambered up the rocks and put on his coat. Lowry's laughing was finished. The fight was off.

"We'll be making for the ship," said Dan to me.

"You'll give me a ride into town?" said Lowry, standing beside the car with his saxophone under his arm. I nodded to him to get in. "I'll be getting aboard my own ship, if she hasn't finished coaling and gone, and reenlist to-day," said Lowry then.

The ship he had quit, with the smoke belching from her funnels and all ready to up anchor, still was in the roadstead when we got to the dock. Lowry went off to her in a sampan and, as we heard later, reenlisted at once as first sergeant. Our own ship, with orders less than an hour old, was ready to up anchor too. Dan and I got over the side in the nick of time to save ourselves from being left on the beach like boobies, after our years of waiting for this thing to happen.

It was not the Mare Island Navy Yard, but a smaller one farther up the coast, that we headed for. Our ship's marine guard, made up as it was of wire-hard men that had got their seasoning in Haiti and Nicaragua, was brought ashore at that yard to lend a hand at hammering into shape the great batches of rookie sea soldiers that poured into the yard from all directions. Lowry's ship turned up at that yard too, and he with his guard of finished ones came ashore to help at the job of making leathernecks of lubbers. Lowry, like Dan, was immediately moved up a peg to sergeant major, and my own sergeant's chevrons were waiting for me. The corps was being trebled and the old shellbacks of us were in line for something we'd never dreamed of—commissions.

Dan, when he came upon Lowry in the yard, looked over the top of his head or off at the clouds on the horizon. The poor old turtle couldn't help it, being made that way, and that Boyne Water tune, from Lowry's saxophone, had burned deep into him. At these meetings Lowry, never seeking something else to rest his eyes on, would look smack-dab into Dan's turned-away face with his slow-coming and slow-going grin. Lowry understood Devine's make and that

is why he did not resent old Dan's glowerings.

After a month of hard work drilling the new men, Lowry was whisked to the commandant's office for work with a pen. One evening he dug me up at the barracks and led me down by the dry dock for a stroll. Although he'd come to get me his mind was elsewhere and he said little.

"Out with it," said I after half 'an hour of this. "You didn't bring me out here in the mist to exercise me after the ten thousand miles I've already done to-day galloping rookies. What's on your mind?"

"Well," said Lowry then, "it's this: There's a lieutenant's commission in the wind. There's a lieutenant to be made for one of two men of this yard's battalion."

"That's nothing to go overboard about," says I. "Who's to get the straps?"

"That's the devil of it," said Lowry. "It rests between Devine and myself, and a choice is to be made at once."

"May the best man win, then," said I. "There's little to choose between the pair of you, except that Dan's been longer in the corps. But you got a wound in Haiti, which makes that even."

"Devine's been nearly twenty years in the outfit, to my ten," said Lowry to that. "Right is right. I'm a believer in service seniority, other things being equal. Devine's a hard man to beat as a sea soldier and he's a good scout at that, grouch and all. There'll be other commissions going. I can wait. This one belongs to him."

"It belongs to the man it's handed to," said I. "And neither the one nor the other of you will have anything to do with that."

But I was mistaken. Lowry so arranged his slate that he had everything to do with it. By that I mean that Lowry got overnight leave from the yard that night and absented himself for two full days. It was the first time in his sea-soldier career that he'd broken his liberty or any other rule of the service. So Dan Devine got the lieutenant's commission. It would have gone hard for Lowry, I think—a sergeant major doing this fool rookie trick of breaking his liberty, with war regulations in force—if I hadn't found a method to set going the story of the real reason behind Lowry's action in such a way that the commandant heard of it. Lowry got off with a reprimand and went back to his office work.

I told Dan about it an hour after he was notified that henceforth he would rate a salute and, on board a man-o'-war, be a gentleman aft.

"Lowry's a mucker all right," I said in finishing. "That's just the way muckers behave."

"Don't rub it in on me," Dan gulped. "God uphold me, I didn't know the man. I'll go find him."

I went with him. It was after nightfall, and we found Lowry squatting alone back of the barracks, playing with a dog. He got up when he saw Dan advancing upon him with his hand out.

"I was wrong about ye, Lowry," said Dan, pretty hoarse. "The name I gave ye is blistering me tongue. I take it back, man to man."

Lowry, his grin gleaming in the half dark, came to attention taut as a ramrod and gave Dan Devine the first salute of his life. It was well meant, but I thought Dan would fall in his tracks with shame.

"Heaven forgive me sinful life," he broke out, "but if ye ever again salute me in private, Lowry, or at any other time except ye have to for the sake of discipline, I'll break every bone in your body!"

The two were close mates after that. This they were the better able to be because Lowry, after his decent man's sacrifice, got his commission anyhow a month later. I had to warn the pair of them about being so promiscuous in their talk with me, an enlisted sergeant. It would damage the discipline among the rookies, I told them. They knew that better than I, but they would dig me up for cuggermugging chaws about the old days and the ships we'd swung hammocks aboard of. This situation wasn't corrected until, when we made the big yard in the East, mobilizing to go over with Jack Pershing, the department, having gone crazy with the heat or something, gave me a commission of my own.

You've read enough about that winter of training the marines had before we were moved up to a sector. It was a little dull for sea soldiers even after we got into the trenches, with mostly night-patrol work to do and some daylight sniping.

But it wasn't dull, if anybody should ask you, on that June morning when, with the French, we grabbed that chunk of Château-Thierry! You'd have fallen into no day-

dreams, there, about whether your hair wouldn't be the better for a little trimming at the back or whether you forgot to gather up your wash on Monday morning! Not at Château-Thierry.

It was when we struck into Belleau Wood that all three of us—Dan, Lowry and myself—got ours. Being, by long habit, enlisted men, even if we were wearing the uniforms of officers, all three of us, who had managed to stick with the same battalion, sort of played around close up with the bucks when we were getting over ground going in. In fact, we made it a practice from the start of that fight to pack rifles, with bayonets fixed of course, on our strolls across. It wasn't regulations, but we didn't exactly savvy getting into that kind of messiness with little sticks when we'd spent so many years trying to learn to be handy with bayonets.

I can see yet, when I shut my eyes, the moon-calf expressions on the faces of that passel of squareheads, about twenty of them, who came from behind a clutter of brush in Belleau Wood with their hands up, yelling "Kamerad! Kamerad!" There wasn't one of them that looked as if he knew enough to pull anything crafty. Dan, Lowry and myself were standing a bit in front of our bunch when those surrendering ones came from behind the brush. Lowry started toward them.

"Look out for them, Lowry!" Dan called out to him. "Let them get into the open. The ones behind the leaders haven't got their hands up."

But Lowry kept on, and so, to make it unanimous, Dan and I jogged up alongside him. That's when we got it. The "Kamerad" squealers in the front rank of those phony-surrendering squareheads were acting as a screen for the bunch of fellows back of them who had grenades. They'd made a pretty good pitch of the grenades before we saw the things coming and started to throw ourselves face down on the grass. That's all I remember. On comparing notes later, I found that Dan and Lowry didn't remember any more than I of what happened after they saw those grenades coming through the air.

We were swabbed up at the same dressing station and brought here, where after a week or so, finding the three of us were old mates, they gave us bunks alongside each other. Pretty soft to be in a crack Paris

hospital like this, eh, with American nurses that know the old home-girl patter to fetch and carry for us? Soft is no name for it!

We were all three of us spattered up a few, but nothing to break our little hearts about. Dan got by with a hole in the back of his head that'll always be good to let enough air in to cool his brains. Lowry's right arm was torn some at the shoulder, but it's as good as new now. If the splinter of a grenade that took me in the neck had had just a little more speed to it I'd have gone out by the old jugular route. But it didn't quite make it.

About a month ago, when Lowry, almost well, was taking a bit of an afternoon nap in his bunk between Dan's and mine, a gray-haired British major, who had Lowry's molten-black eyes of a Hindu, came along, escorted by a smiling nurse, to the foot of Lowry's bunk and stood there for a minute looking at him. Lowry, as a sleeping man will when eyes are boring into him, woke up and stared at the major looking down at him. Then the two grinned in each other's faces.

"What ho, Frankie!" said Lowry, sitting up. "How's home?"

"Hullo, George," says the British major. "Feeling fit?"

That, if you get me, was the greeting of these two Lowry brothers that hadn't

clapped an eye on each other for twenty years. But they gripped hands after that.

"Home," says this major of the British artillery, "is better than ever. You've a Blighty wound, they tell me. That puts you in clover. Now you'll have a look again at old Tralee."

There was a gasp from Dan's bunk. He had half raised himself, with his elbows dug into his pillow, and his eyes were popping with the stare he was giving these two Lowrys, turn and turn about.

"Tralee, did I hear?" he sort of gurgled. "Tralee, is it?"

Lowry turned his dark-muzzled grin full upon him.

"Tralee it is, Dan," said he. "Worse and more of it, I'm the Lowry cub you thrashed into his pillow, and his eyes were popping with the stare he was giving these two Lowrys, turn and turn about. It struck me as a rum go and a funny one that I should have to put up my dukes again with the same Devine such a long time later and for the same reason."

Yes, this certainly is a hospital proper, and it's beating the devil around a stump to lie here and be waited on. But it's a bit lonesome since Devine and Lowry went off on their leave. They've gone home to Tralee together, with plenty of money in their pockets for gifts and tokens.

PRAISE FROM A SUPERIOR OFFICER

THE war-camp community service in Washington offers entertainment to soldiers and insists on democracy. There must be no distinction between officers and men. Washington hostesses fell into the spirit of this with one exception. This was when a certain hostess would have only commissioned officers at her house.

Finally her daughter developed a great fondness for a dashing young lieutenant who spoiled things by insisting on bringing a private to the house. At last, driven into a corner, the young woman said:

"But this private! Is he all right? How long have you known him?"

"He's great," said the lieutenant. "I know him well. I was his chauffeur for three years before the war."

All the charm of the Southern Seas seems to be concentrated in "THE FRIGATE BIRD," a fine two-part story by H. de Vere Stacpoole, the opening chapters of which will appear in the next POPULAR.

The Gentleman Strangler

By Charles K. Van Riper

Crime has its pleasant as well as unpleasant paths, perhaps. At least, one of the crooks in this story thought so when he took to Fifth Avenue tailors, a cane, a monocle, and cultivated an English manner. But his partner failed to appreciate the softer values

THE GENTLEMAN STRANGLER'S real name was Driscoll. But seven years ago that name had fallen into disuse, the owner having checked it at the warden's office where they gave him a number redeemable on the day of his release.

The name, steam-cleaned and pressed by the expiation of his crime, had been restored by a worldly-wise warden who bade him go and sin no more—than was necessary. As names were plentiful, the parting guest could see no necessity for clinging to one that bore the laundry mark of the law and shied it into the discard when he turned the corner from the prison. Thenceforth he had visited a variety of aliases upon himself, but none more deservedly or with more piquancy and picturesqueness than The Gentleman Strangler. And the christening had a history.

The first thing Driscoll had done on leaving prison had been to look for Harry Slidell; the second had been to discover that Slidell was nowhere to be found. Tenth Avenue knew him no longer, hadn't seen or heard of him, it developed, since about the time Driscoll himself had been packed in camphor by the courts. Driscoll hunted high and low without success. But although, before long, he busied himself with other things, he never gave up the search. He knew that some time, somewhere, somehow he was going to meet Slidell. It happened on a Sixth Avenue surface car.

Driscoll recognized Slidell the instant he stepped into the crowded aisle of the car. There could be no mistaking the tall, rather elegantly indolent figure and the lean, clean-shaven face with the drawn-down mouth. Driscoll was sure of his man, although seven years had passed since Slidell slipped away that afternoon in the crowd on Fifth Avenue.

At the moment of the disappearance Driscoll

had attempted to follow, only to be discouraged by a detective who had observed him in the act of alienating a purse from its lawful possessor. The interrupted indiscretion and suspected past performances had accounted for Driscoll being hors-de-out-of-doors for six and one-half of the intervening seven years. That was what it had amounted to after the warden had figured in all the trade discounts for good behavior.

And while Driscoll had been in prison, Slidell had been playing in luck, to judge by the handsomely tailored clothes that contrasted sharply with Driscoll's own indifferent apparel. In running his eyes along the lines of the clothes, Driscoll grunted in stupefied astonishment. A cane was crooked over Slidell's elbow! Harry Slidell had always threatened to be a gentleman. Apparently he had gone and done it.

On encountering Slidell, Driscoll had been scanning a night extra. He at once proceeded to completely disguise himself as a newspaper reader, but peered at Slidell around an edge of the sheet. The crush on the car kept forcing the man in the aisle closer as Driscoll appraised the sharp-featured face that he had so often seen gleaming with sinister cunning. There was no suggestion of the evil genius now; nothing that would mark Slidell as other than an average individual of more than average fortune.

"A dead ringer for old John W. Prosperity!" mused Driscoll, and completed the summing-up with the observation: "And still playing himself win, place and show in the Popularity Sweepstakes."

A woman with a baby was pushed close to where Driscoll was sitting and he got to his feet, clumsily touching his hat. Driscoll carefully avoided Slidell. It is doubtful if the other would have recognized him, for although his rugged constitution had

withstood well the rigors of the stretch in stir not the fairest flower can blush unseen in the State's hothouse without doing some drooping. Nevertheless, Driscoll took no chances. He had a surprise for Slidell.

The windows of the car were backed up with the blackness of the night and mirrored the faces of those who filled the aisle. Driscoll settled his hat farther over his eyes and squinted at the window opposite Slidell. The glass reflected a gleam of gold from a watch chain against a champagne-colored waistcoat, and Driscoll sidled closer.

Clinging to a strap, Slidell had turned a tolerantly interested eye on the car ads. Driscoll kept his face averted. As the car stopped he steadied himself, and when it started again lurched against Slidell, straightening up quickly. Slidell swept him with a withering glance, without recognition. Then he scowled again at the car cards.

After a moment of suspense, Driscoll tingled with the thrill of success. He gleefully took note that the gleam of the gold chain was absent from Slidell's mirrored person. Then, turning, he said: "'Scuse me, but have you got the time?"

As Driscoll spoke, he thrust his face close to Slidell's and grinned when he saw the latter's eyes widen with amazement and his jaw sag in surprise.

"Driscoll!" gasped Slidell, fumbling futilely in the pocket where the watch had been. The cane became dislodged and Driscoll deftly saved it from falling to the floor.

"Here's your cork leg," he laughed, crooking the stick over the other's arm.

As the shock passed, Slidell began to smile rather uncertainly. Driscoll kept grinning.

"You haven't forgotten me!" he chuckled.

Slidell went white with agitation. "S-s-s-h!" he cautioned. "Not so loud!"

"It's all right," Driscoll assured him, and impulsively thrusting out his hand, added: "Slip me the Marguerite!"

Gulping nervously, Slidell at first made no move to take the hand; even tried to evade Driscoll's eyes.

"Not after all me and you's been through together!" whispered Driscoll in astonishment.

With a furtive glance at him, Slidell took the hand gingerly and murmured: "Excuse my glove!"

"Excuse your glove!" echoed Driscoll under his breath as he recoiled in amazement. Then the derision died away under the

affront of the hesitating handshake and Driscoll drew himself up rigidly, stung by the salt of resentment.

Between the men there was a moment of silence so intense that not even the clamor in the crowded car penetrated it. Then Slidell moistened his lips and said: "It's—it's not the proper thing to discuss one's personal affairs in public!"

Hot anger blazed from Driscoll's eyes as he swept them swiftly from Slidell's impeccable hat to his immaculate shoes. Then there flashed on him a possible explanation.

"Say," he blurted, "if you're going on the square now and don't want to mix with me, I'm the last one to queer your game!"

Slidell was trembling. Every word made it worse, for Driscoll had developed in the pen the convict habit of talking huskily from a corner of his mouth. Oblivious to the consternation he was causing, Driscoll continued in a croaking whisper: "Tip me, if you're off the——"

Slidell could stand it no longer. "If it's all the same to you," he stammered, "let's take a taxi."

"Suits me," growled Driscoll, and before he could say another word Slidell was leading the way off the surface car. Driscoll, seeing only his companion's back, was unaware of the enormous relief Slidell showed at smothering the public dissertation on the secret memoirs of his past.

"Same old Slidell!" observed Driscoll, with a degree of grudging admiration, as he approved the flourish of the walking stick with which a taxi was hailed and the air of authority with which the other gave directions for their transfer uptown. "Same old Slick!" he reflected, using the name that had been Slidell's when they were pals, the smartest pair of pickpockets that ever jostled an unsuspecting mark.

"This is better," began Driscoll as he moved over to make room on the seat for Slidell, then his thoughts ran back to the rebuff on the street car, and he demanded: "What was the idea, Slick?"

"Don't call me 'Slick,'" exclaimed Slidell, swinging around on him. "Mr. Slidell" would sound better, considering the difference in our stations."

That staggered Driscoll. "The—difference—in our——" he gurgled, then flared angrily: "Speaking of stations, where do you think you get off? Maybe you were

right about the soft-pedal stuff before, but we're alone now and it don't go! See!"

Slidell sought to soothe him. "I was only spoof—er—that is kidding," he corrected himself. But his inflection put quotation marks around the slangy "kidding."

Driscoll ignored the olive branch. "Me call you 'Mister!' Open your parachute and flutter back to earth."

Forceful as was the speech, much of its effectiveness was lost through the breath being bumped from Driscoll as the taxi dodged around an L pillar and flung him against the side of the seat. Driscoll was more peeved than ever.

"I merely suggested it as a precaution," Slidell assured him, pretending a preoccupation in the smoothing of his champagne-colored gloves to hide a smile at Driscoll's discomfiture. "Suspicion might be excited," he continued, "by undue intimacy between a man of my refinement and a person of your—pardon me—uncouth appearance!"

"You can't pull your high-toned talk on me!" seethed Driscoll. "I know you, Slidell, and for an old pal, that's pretty raw."

Driscoll trembled in every fiber. There had been times when he had saved them both from consequences that later overtook him alone that day on the Avenue. Not that it hadn't been all right for Slidell to make a get-away when he had the chance, but it was dead wrong for Slidell to try to put it over him now. And there was the question of Slidell having stood by idly while his pal was being sent over the road, and of the years of silence while he was doing time—that was the question that had driven Driscoll to search for Slidell, the question for which he wanted an answer. He turned to demand it, but exploded in a snort of derision.

Slidell was blandly screwing a monocle into his eye.

"Pipe the periscope!" hooted Driscoll, and laughed in the other's face.

Slidell sat back, smiling affably. "What a unique notion!" he exclaimed. "Fancy, calling it a periscope!"

Driscoll all but choked. "Say," he blurted, "what's come over you?"

Slidell whisked excited hands over his coat. "Come over? Come over?" he repeated in mystified alarm.

"The window glass and the peg leg!" snapped Driscoll.

"Such quaint language," Slidell protested mildly. "I don't follow you, my dear fellow!"

Driscoll looked at Slidell wildly askance; struck with a sudden suspicion. Under the spur of the idea he surged up from the seat, his hand yearning for the heft of an old-fashioned brick. But Slidell, laughing harshly, reached out and yanked him back to the seat.

"Sit down," he said. "I presume you think I'm crazy."

Driscoll looked him in the eye. "Honest," he admitted, "I'd be ashamed to tell you what I think about you, Little Lord Fauntleroy!"

"Insinuations are in abominable taste!" Slidell spoke in a dangerously quiet drawl.

"Taste!" sniffed Driscoll.

"Exactly," continued the other. "Very ungentelemanly—and I can tell you it pays to be a gentleman."

"How do you happen to know?" challenged Driscoll.

Slidell laughed. "I'm one."

"You're one, all right," railed Driscoll. "One big bluff!"

Slidell overlooked the opinion. "Furthermore," he observed, "you're responsible for me being a gentleman. Sort of a horrible example," he added.

Driscoll let Slidell proceed. "The idea came to me that day the person from police headquarters detained you on Fifth Avenue," he explained. "There was just one reason why I got away, Driscoll, when they made the arrest. I looked as if I *might* be of the Fifth Avenue sort. You didn't. You looked like what you were, a—a— What was the old word? Oh yes! A 'pocket duster!'" Again the disinfecting quotation marks were in evidence.

Driscoll continued silent, scowling at the illuminated dial of the taximeter. Slidell went on: "That was my inspiration, Driscoll. I acted on it. Look at me now, I'm a gentleman—dress and manners."

Driscoll looked, scornfully.

"If you want my opinion," he said tartly, "you look about as genuine as a last year's show bill on the woodshed wall."

Slidell laughed. "As you will, Driscoll. But you must admit I've made extremely gratifying progress. Ah, here we are!"

Driscoll emerged from the cab to find himself in front of an imposing-looking apartment-house. By the time Slidell had

settled the score with the taxi driver, Driscoll was properly impressed with the eminent respectability of the dwelling. A hall-boy opened the door for them with marked deference—he'd only been there three days—and an older one wearily led the way to an elevator. Driscoll didn't venture to talk until Slidell had swung open the door of an apartment, stood aside so that he could enter, and then followed. When he did speak it was to exclaim:

"Real class to this bungalow!"

"Like it?" asked Slidell, and having disposed of his hat and cane on a rack just inside the door, remarked: "I find it comfy!"

"Comfy!" echoed Driscoll under his breath, and eyed Slidell sharply.

"Put up your hat and stick. Oh, I beg your pardon, Driscoll, you aren't wearing one."

"Cane!" grunted Driscoll. "You can count me out on the Christian Science umbrella habit."

As Driscoll was finding a place among the dusters and raincoats for his hat, Slidell apologized:

"Sorry my man is out, old chap."

That was more than Driscoll could stand. He stuck his hands on his hips and faced Slidell squarely. "I give you warning not to call me dearie!" he said sourly.

"No harm intended, Driscoll," explained Slidell. "It's quite second nature to me now. Just come along into the living room and I'll offer you a brandy and soda and a cigar while we talk over old times."

Slidell led the way.

At the end of the hall Slidell pressed a button and there lighted up before Driscoll a room that took his breath away. There were chairs with vast valleys of cushions, soft-toned lamps, thick rugs, rich hangings and bookcases that lined the walls. In front of a wide fireplace with queer old andirons was stretched a magnificent tiger skin.

"How do you like it?" asked Slidell, perceiving Driscoll's astonishment.

"Huh—yeh—it's all right!" gasped Driscoll, and continued to stare at everything.

"And it all comes from being a gentleman," explained Slidell.

"I don't see how you did it!" exclaimed Driscoll, still stunned.

Slidell laughed. "Make yourself comfortable and I'll keep my promise," he remarked, swinging open the door of a cella-

ret. In an evident effort to make his guest feel more at ease Slidell asked: "How have you been? What have you been doing?"

"Doing time, mostly," sighed Driscoll dolefully. Then the old question sprang up in his mind. "Say," he demanded, "where was you when they was putting me away?"

Slidell set down in front of Driscoll the glass he had been pouring. "By the way," he said, "that's something I must thank you for, Driscoll. I can't tell you how much I've appreciated your keeping silent about me when they sent you to prison."

"No, I wouldn't squeal on no one," breathed Driscoll. Then he added with bitterness: "But you showed your gratitude, you did!" In sudden agitation Driscoll rose and walked to the window. There he turned on Slidell, demanding: "Why didn't you sign up a lawyer to pry me out of the pen?"

"It was too hazardous," protested Slidell. "A thing like that might have implicated me."

"Would it have been gentlemanly?" asked Driscoll with sharp sarcasm.

To Driscoll, it seemed that Slidell reddened a little, but he ventured no reply. In the lull, Driscoll drifted from the window to a bookcase and picked up a bronze Buddha that had attracted his attention. He was turning it over curiously when Slidell asked him if he would have a cigar. Driscoll turned to find his host offering a boxful.

Driscoll was hostile.

"Do have one," urged Slidell, adding persuasively: "They're really a jolly smoke. My own brand." Still Driscoll made no move to take one. "You'll find them excellent," persisted Slidell.

Driscoll really did want to smoke, and he guessed that taking one of the long, sleekly brown invincibles wouldn't obligate him too deeply to Slidell. He replaced the Buddha and selected a cigar, scowling at the crimson and gold band—Flor de Sonora.

"The shop at the corner keeps them in stock especially for me," explained Slidell, helping himself to a smoke.

Driscoll bit off the end of the cigar and spat spaciouly toward a trash basket. Slidell, fumbling in his pocket, suddenly looked up.

"Oh, I say, Driscoll," he laughed, "let me have my watch and chain before you forget it, like a good fellow!"

Driscoll silently fished in his pocket and

brought out the articles. Slidell, taking them, trimmed his cigar with a cutter that depended from an end of the chain and then, moistening his fingers, slipped off the encircling band. They shared a match, Slidell touching it to his own cigar after Driscoll's had been lighted.

Driscoll turned again to the Buddha. "Say," he inquired, jerking a thumb toward it, "where's the clock that belongs with that thing?"

Slidell, reaching for a tray to hold the cigar band he was discarding, looked up. "Clock?" he echoed. "What clock?"

"Sure," said Driscoll, "ain't that the top of one of them parlor mantel clocks? We had one with a horse on it, and I've seen 'em with those knights in armor on them, you know, Roman agitators; but this here ornament is the queerest one ever I seen."

Disposing of the cigar band, Slidell smiled faintly. "That's not for a clock," he explained. "Your friend, Driscoll, is Buddha—'The great god Bud,' as Kipling has it."

Driscoll looked his mystification.

"He's a pagan god," continued Slidell, then, seeing it hadn't served to enlighten, added: "Pagan—heathen!"

"Oh, a idol, huh!" exclaimed Driscoll as the truth dawned. "Now that you're a gentleman are you a heathen, too?"

"No," drawled Slidell.

"What's it for, then?" demanded Driscoll, again in doubt.

"Just a little artistic touch."

Driscoll scratched his head in a way expressive of his appreciation of the stolid, squatty Buddha's merit as a work of art. Slidell smiled indulgently, and changed the subject.

"There's nothing like being a gentleman," he assured his guest. "It pays to be a gentleman whether you're a banker, minister, merchant or burglar."

"The jails are full of gentlemen burglars," breathed Driscoll, exhaling a cloud of smoke as he lounged against the bookcase.

"Would-be gentlemen burglars," Slidell corrected him. "The trouble is they are either inferior burglars or such born bounders they never could be gentlemen." Slidell let a feather of smoke issue from between his lips.

"I've been thorough," he continued. "I've gone into this gentleman business for all I've been worth. I've dressed the way gen-

tlemen dress, talked the way gentlemen talk, acted as they act, read what they read, played gentlemen's games. Driscoll, old boy, I'm quite a golfer!"

"Don't call me old boy!" growled Driscoll, "I suppose you're a perfect brute at croquet, too!"

Slidell laughed. "It's all in the life!"

"Do you take a bath every Saturday night?" asked Driscoll in mock alarm.

"Not 'bath!'" objected Slidell. "One takes one's 'tub,' you know. I do that. I drink like a gentleman, and smoke a gentleman's cigars. This idea of having a favorite brand——"

"A lot of bunk, I call it!" puffed Driscoll, picking up and examining an incense pot of carved teakwood, lacquered bronze and ivory.

"Call it what you will, it's worked," replied Slidell, and paused to blow a ring of smoke toward a table lamp. "A man can't really feel like a gentleman while he's smoking a five-cent cigar."

"What does it get you?" demanded Driscoll.

Slidell swept the handsomely appointed room with a gesture to indicate that its completeness was his answer.

With a disparaging toss of his head toward the Buddha, Driscoll observed: "You mean things like that brass monkey, and this——" He picked up the incense pot. "What is this, anyway?"

"A Chinese incense pot," explained Slidell. "Smell it."

Driscoll did.

"Chinese punk!" he exploded. "Now I get what you mean by insect pot. Are the mosquitoes as bad as that around here?"

"Not 'insect;' 'incense,'" corrected Slidell. "It's used in religious rites and at society tea parties. Burns sandalwood."

"You can have your tea parties and sandalwood," declared Driscoll, replacing the antique. He moved over to a chair in front of the fireplace and sank down in it, scuffing at the tiger-skin rug.

"There's something I want to ask you," he said.

Slidell eyed him curiously, and Driscoll cleared his throat.

"From what you've said," he continued, "I take it that you ain't turned honest or gone into business or anything?"

"Trade!" exclaimed Slidell. "How vulgar!"

"The point is," Driscoll went on, "you're still—well, still on the graft?"

Slidell nodded.

Driscoll strained forward in the chair. "Then, why," he demanded, "why did you try to give me the stall on the street car?"

"Can't you understand," retorted Slidell. "It wouldn't do for us to be seen together. You're so obviously a rough character, while I'm a gentleman."

"Say," snapped Driscoll, "what's the big idea in this gentleman gag!"

"I've tried to convey it to you," complained Slidell. "You have Tenth Avenue stamped all over you. I look like Fifth."

"Lay off that!"

"I beg your pardon." The curt reprimand silenced Driscoll.

"If you're satisfied with picayune returns," remarked Slidell, "you're all right. But if you want to play for big stakes you have to go where they are. And you have to dress and act the part to get there."

Driscoll was scowling.

"I can see," said Slidell, "that you don't think clothes make the pickpocket."

"Not in a thousand years!" declared Driscoll. "I could be dressed like a pushcart chauffeur and pinch the purse of the swellest dame in Palm Beach if my digits were in tune."

Slidell, mildly amused, studied the end of his cigar. "Well and good," he drawled, "but you couldn't have done what I did this afternoon."

Driscoll sat back, impressed with a sense of important disclosures impending. Following up the hint, Slidell continued:

"You couldn't have gotten into one of the finest houses on Park Avenue and helped yourself freely. I couldn't have done it myself if I hadn't been able to appraise the place without disclosing the fact that I was—well, a crook. Suppose you had gone into Park Avenue and showed an interest in the home of Mrs. — any house in the neighborhood. They'd have catalogued you in no time."

Slidell lolled back in his chair and drew a leisurely puff from his cigar.

"I took my time about it," he went on, "and after completing my errand helped myself from the decanter and lighted a cigar. That's the way to work. I'll tell you, Driscoll!"

Driscoll had developed a new interest as Slidell talked.

"So you've gone in for housebreaking!" he exclaimed.

"A little," admitted Slidell.

"Take it from me," Driscoll earnestly predicted, "you're riding for a fall. You were an all-right dip, but this— Take my advice and pass it up!"

"You are most discouraging," sighed Slidell in pretended dismay. "I've gone in for it though, and I'm not half bad. It all comes from being a gentleman."

"You're crowding your luck!" growled Driscoll. After a pause he speculated: "I suppose that being a gentleman, you never break into a house without first passing in your calling card."

"Er—well," stammered Slidell, "that would be going somewhat too far. But I do observe all the little niceties where possible."

"Such as helping yourself to the drinks and sitting down for a smoke."

"Naturally," remarked Slidell. "If my host were home I wouldn't be permitted to depart without refreshment."

"You wouldn't be permitted to depart at all—until the police arrived."

Slidell smiled in a bored way. "What crude repartee!" he drawled.

Like the flash of powder Driscoll was on his feet.

"Cut that out!" he snarled. "You can't make a sucker out of me, Slick Slidell!"

As he spoke, Driscoll strode over to Slidell's chair, his jaw set and fists clenched. Slidell kept smiling.

"It's come to a show-down!" snapped Driscoll. "I thought at first you was on some reformer's milk diet, but I've got you straight now. I was all right when we were stringing along together on my nippers and your ideas. But now that you're grabbing off the cream you ain't got no use for me."

"I say!" objected Slidell.

"Don't lie!" snarled Driscoll. "You're so almighty I look like a three-spot draw to an act-high straight. But I've got something coming to me, I have! You crawled out from under when the police put the bee on me, but you've got to come through now, and come through fast!"

"You misjudge me—" began Slidell.

"Can the fancy chatter!" flashed Driscoll. "Come on, produce."

"Give me an opportunity to finish what I started," persisted Slidell. "I never had any intention of not counting you in on a part-

nership. Here you've been calling me names, and——"

Slidell was speaking in an injured tone that caused Driscoll to draw back in surprise.

"You've accused me of being about everything but a stool," continued Slidell. "If I hadn't meant to be clubby with you again, why do you suppose I brought you here to my lodgings?"

Slidell put it in such a way that Driscoll felt just a little ashamed of himself. But he was by no means convinced, and thrusting his cigar in his mouth renewed the challenge in his eyes.

When Slidell resumed it was in a voice that quavered. "You can't know how badly it makes me feel," he said, "to have you question my integrity. You don't suppose, old man, that I have forgotten, or even can forget, my obligation to you. Why, I've never had a better friend than you." Slidell's eyes were misty. Driscoll was overcome by a most disquieting uneasiness.

"Remember the time——" began Slidell in a plaintive pitch, but Driscoll could stand it no longer. He swept forward and caught the other's hand.

"Never mind, old kid," he said huskily. "Don't say no more."

Slidell took the hand and gripped it, gratefully this time.

The last vestige of Driscoll's doubts disappeared.

"You and me's pals again," he mumbled, and kicked at the tiger-skin rug in a kind of boyish embarrassment at the momentary show of emotion. He drew assurance from the cigar.

"Better ones than ever," murmured Slidell.

"And I guess you were right about keeping under cover while I was in the pen," Driscoll burst out magnanimously, "and about the cue for soft music when I met you in the car."

"I think so," said Slidell.

In the pause, Driscoll drew a deep puff from his cigar, a puff that set him spluttering and coughing.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed, examining the cigar to find that the bright band of gold and crimson had caught fire and was smoldering.

Slidell, too, discerned the trouble. "There's where being a gentleman is going to help you," he observed. "Gentlemen al-

ways slip the bands from their cigars before they light them."

"Being a gentleman? Me?" demanded Driscoll quickly.

Slidell was picking up the box of cigars. "Certainly," he said.

"Not for little Ambrose!" hooted Driscoll.

"Smoke a fresh cigar," offered Slidell, "and put some in your pocket." Driscoll prepared to do both, then Slidell explained: "Of course you're going to be a gentleman and——"

"And talk like you do!" railed Driscoll.

Slidell nodded and went on, "You see how well I've gotten along. You can do the same thing. You'll have to if we are to get the best results."

Driscoll paused in tucking the cigars into his pocket. "Ain't you kind of overplaying this gentleman thing?" he asked.

Slidell shook his head.

"I wonder," said Driscoll, "what kind of a gentleman I'd make."

"Try it!" laughed Slidell.

The champagne-colored gloves were lying on the table and Driscoll picked them up curiously. Grinning sheepishly he drew them on, then stood off for Slidell's inspection.

"How do I look in the pulse muffers?" he inquired.

"Clever!"

"Say!" exclaimed Driscoll. "Where's the cane?" Then recalling that Slidell had hung it up down the hall, started for it.

"Careful of that stick," Slidell called after him sharply.

Driscoll secured the cane and swaggered back into the living room, resplendent with walking stick and gloves.

"Take a flash at the plute!" chuckled Driscoll as he strutted. Pride tripped him up, for he stumbled over the tiger's head. He stuck out the cane to keep his balance, and an amazing thing happened.

Driscoll found himself clutching a crooked handle that had parted company from the rest of the stick. And spilled on the tiger skin were glittering diamonds and a string of lustrous pearls, halfway out of the hollow length of the cane.

"Holy saints!" gasped Driscoll.

With an exclamation of impatience, Slidell had glided forward and was gathering up the gems.

"Where did you get 'em?" asked Driscoll in awe.

The other paid no attention to him, jamming the stones back into the cane and adjusting the handle.

"Some rocks!" Driscoll declared.

With the precious hoard restored to the hollow cane, Slidell hung the stick on the back of the chair by the fireplace and turned his attention to Driscoll.

"Where did you get 'em?" was the question he met.

"Up in Park Avenue this afternoon."

"No wonder you're strong for the gentleman stuff!"

"It has its good points," admitted Slidell. "You——"

There was the sound of a key turning in a lock at the end of the hall. Driscoll shot a swift glance at Slidell. A curious expression crossed the other's face.

"Perhaps it's your hired man!" faltered Driscoll.

"It wouldn't be him!" whispered Slidell.

"There's no——"

Footsteps sounded in the corridor. Slidell put a quickly cautioning finger to his lips and both men turned to the portières that screened the hall. Through them came a square-jawed, square-toed man. Driscoll needed no introduction. He knew a detective when he saw one.

Driscoll's heart bobbed up into his throat and then dropped like a plummet through the very soles of his feet. He could see himself in gray again—sweating, coughing, and straining his eyes in the dusty brush shop of the grim-walled prison.

But the detective never gave Driscoll a glance. His eyes met Slidell's and he snarled: "You're a fine one, ain't you!" With a sidelong glance Slidell apprised him of Driscoll's presence. The detective swung around.

"Who's he?" he asked, speaking to Slidell, while running his eyes over Driscoll.

"Just back from up the river," explained Slidell, and to Driscoll, said: "Meet Detective Fink."

"No time for that," snorted Fink, turning back to Slidell. "You've got into a pretty mess with the job you turned to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked Slidell excitedly.

"They've got you dead to rights!"

Slidell swore under his breath. Driscoll was in a dizzy whirl, but he saw that Slidell
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had been stripped of the suave manner he had affected.

"You left one of those damned cigar bands on an ash tray," Fink ran on rapidly. "I was sent up there with the Old Man. He's following up the band now. I recognized it the minute I set eyes on it and beat it right over here to put you wise."

Slidell was nervously pacing the room. Driscoll's excitement had subsided sufficiently for him to realize Slidell's dope on the disposition of cigar bands had gone awry. Removing them might be gentlemanly, but evidently it wasn't wise. As he watched Slidell, Driscoll felt a half-defined disgust for the man. So that was how he had been getting away with it! Laying in with the cops!

"The Old Man's hot on the trail, too," continued Fink. "He got the office of the cigar company on the phone and they told him they kept the brand in only one store for a special customer. He was starting for the store on the corner when I managed to break away."

"What are we going to do?" demanded Slidell, halting irresolutely.

"We're not going to do anything, that is, *you're* not. I'm going to arrest you!"

Slidell started violently. "You're what?" he gasped.

"Goin' to arrest you!" Fink eyed Slidell unblinkingly. Certainly, Driscoll decided, the detective was not the man to mix sentiment with business.

Evidently Slidell had been doing some thinking of his own, for when he spoke again it was with a show of nonchalance. "Of course, Fink, if you insist there's nothing for me to do but to consent to arrest. But have you thought of the dividends you're going to miss?"

Fink gulped, and Driscoll saw the greedy look in his eyes. In the gloves Driscoll's hands were wet with sweat.

"Don't make no difference," blustered the detective. "Do you know who you went up against this afternoon?"

"Of course I do."

"You don't!" blurted Fink. "Or you wouldn't say it offhand like that. I want to tell you the father of the lady you gouged is got such a pull in this old town that if I don't land the goods and the gent that did it I'll be broke faster than you can wink."

Slidell pretended not to be impressed.

"Can't you see I've got to make a pinch!" exploded Fink.

Slidell raised his eyebrows.

"I've got to, or some one else will," fumed Fink, "and I might as well get the credit."

"But why pick on me?" asked Slidell casually.

"Because you're the guy that done it!" roared Fink.

"I'm also the best paying investment you ever had," retorted Slidell.

Driscoll could see that the dig went home. The detective moved around to the fireplace and stood with his feet braced and settled deep in the tiger's fur. His hands were clasped behind his back, the fingers twitching. Driscoll looked down at his own hands and found the perspiration had soaked through the champagne-colored gloves.

"No use!" said Fink, at length. "You've gone too high. It's all right to hit for the big fellows, but don't pick 'em when they're so big they're able to do things."

"Couldn't it be arranged," drawled Slidell, "if I passed over everything I got this afternoon?"

Fink's fingers were working nervously, but he got control of himself and said: "It can't be arranged at all! That cigar band—it's too clear a case."

"Other people smoke those cigars," suggested Slidell.

"The company says not!"

"But I know they do," declared Slidell. "I've given some away." Slidell looked straight at Driscoll with the cigars sticking from his pocket. Fink turned, too. For a moment he scowled, then his heavy face brightened. Driscoll's flesh crept.

"You mean—" muttered Fink.

"I mean there's no good spoiling our graft when we can frame some one else!"

Stunned by the suddenness of it, Driscoll looked at Slidell to find all the evil of the man leering from his face.

"It's dead easy, Fink!" Slidell cried, "with his record he hasn't got a chance!"

"You rat!" cried Driscoll, and swung toward the detective, a grinning gargoyle only the length of the rug away. On the instant came an inspiration.

Without a glance of warning, Driscoll bent down and gave the tiger skin a terrific tug.

As the rug went out from under Fink's feet he was upended in a thundering crash.

His head glanced against an andiron as he fell and struck heavily on the hearth.

Snatching up the cane, Driscoll leaped over the fallen detective and lashed at Slidell. The stick broke as it crashed across Slidell's face and the hidden jewels showered over the room. Driscoll followed the blow with a punch that caught the dazed Slidell on the side of the neck and sent him spinning to the floor. Panting in triumph, Driscoll stood over him a moment, then pounced on the pearl necklace and stuffed it into his pocket.

Darting swiftly around the room, Driscoll gathered the scattered gems, the gloves making his fingers fumble. He had just retrieved the last of the stones when a scraping sound caused him to wheel to the corner in which Slidell had gone down.

Wild-eyed, Slidell was struggling to his feet, and dashing the blood from his cheek, faced Driscoll.

With the diamonds stowed beside the pearls, Driscoll gathered himself for the attack. Before Slidell could move, he sprang at him. They went down in a writhing heap, Slidell driving desperately with his fists. Driscoll chose the deadlier way, and hunching up under the blows, got his own hands at the other's throat.

The fingers found a firm grip that tightened and tightened until the seams of the gloves Driscoll was wearing burst under the pressure of his hands. Slidell was gasping.

"So you're a gentleman!" grunted Driscoll, as he knotted his fingers into the other's neck. "You're a low-lived, double-crossing skunk!"

Slidell stopped struggling and Driscoll loosened but did not release his hold. He glanced over at Fink to find the detective showing reassuring signs of life, but no evidence of an immediate inclination to fight. Slidell was all right, too, except that the breath was pretty thoroughly choked out of him. Grinning at the wreck of the gloves, Driscoll waited until the other opened his eyes.

"Before I go," he said, on getting Slidell's attention, "I want to say I wouldn't have pinched your windpipe if you hadn't really needed it!"

Then, throttling him earnestly in parting, Driscoll added:

"And being a gentlemanly strangler—'scuse my gloves!"

Silver and Gold

By Dane Coolidge

Author of "Rim-Rock Jones," Etc.

SYNOPSIS OF PREVIOUS CHAPTERS

A fortune teller had told Denver Russell that he would find two treasures, "within the shadow of a Place of Death," and that one of the treasures would be silver and the other gold, but that he must choose well between them and both would be his—but if he chose unwisely he would lose both, and be disgraced also. In the shadow of Apache Leap, in the mining region of Arizona, he learns that there are both silver and gold mining claims to be had cheaply. A part of the seeress' prophecy was to the effect that he was to fall in love with a beautiful artist, and eventually meet death at the hands of his dearest friend. Bunker Hill, a luckless man with a silver mine, has a beautiful daughter who is studying to become an operatic star, and Russell is charmed by her personality. A Professor Diffenderfer has a gold mining claim, and he and Hill both seek to sell their respective claims to Russell, who has won some hundreds of dollars in a miners' drilling contest, and who overtakes a hobo who has stolen the money from him and, after a fist fight in the presence of Hill, wrests it away from him. After examining Hill's claim, which he finds to be valuable, he accompanies Diffenderfer to look at his property. He buys the silver claim after the flight of an eagle indicates that his luck will be in that direction, and strikes valuable ore. Bunker Hill's daughter Drusilla visits him one day and offers to buy back the mine, saying that she is discouraged by her musical prospects, but Denver declines to sell, and they become more interested in each other. Her singing appeals to him strongly every time he hears it. He meets "Bible-back" Murray, a prospector who has a bad reputation, and whose gunman, Dave Chatworth, tries to intimidate Russell. He is afterward warned against Murray by Hill.

(A Four-Part Story—Part Three)

CHAPTER XV.

A NIGHT FOR LOVE.

THERE was music that evening in the Bunker Hill mansion, but Denver Russell sat sulking in his cave with no company but an inquisitive pack rat. He regretted now his curt refusal to join the Hills at supper, for Drusilla was singing gloriously; but a man without pride is a despicable creature, and old Bunk had tried to insult him. So he went to bed, and early in the morning while the shadow of Apache Leap still lay like a blanket across the plain, he set out to fulfill his contract. Across one shoulder he hung a huge canteen of water, on the other a sack of powder and fuse; and, to top off his burden, he carried a long steel churn drill and a spoon for scooping out the muck.

The discovery hole of Bunker's Number Two claim was just up the creek from his own and, after looking it over, Denver climbed up the tank and measured off six feet from the edge. Then, raising the steel bar, he struck it into the ground, churning it rhythmically up and down; and as the

hole rapidly deepened he spooned it out and poured in a little more water. It was the same uninteresting work that he had seen men do when they were digging a railroad cut; and the object was the same, to shoot down the dirt with the minimum of labor and powder. But with Denver it became a work of art, a test of his muscle and skill, and at each downward thrust he bent from the hips and struck with a deep-chested: "Huh!"

An hour passed by, and half the length of the drill was buried at the end of the stroke; and then, as he paused to wipe the sweat from his eyes, Denver saw that his activities were being noted. Drusilla was looking on from the trail below, and apparently with the greatest interest. She was dressed in a corduroy suit, with a broad sombrero against the sun; and as she came up the slope she leaped from rock to rock in a heavy pair of boys' high boots. There was nothing of the singer about her now, nor of the filmy-clad, barefooted dancer; the jagged ridge of old Pinal would permit of nothing so effeminate. Yet, over the rocks as on the smooth trails, she had a grace that

was all her own, for those hillsides had been her home.

"Well, how's the millionaire?" she inquired with a smile that made his fond heart miss a beat. "Is *this* the way you do it? Are you just going to drill one hole?"

"That's the dope," replied Denver, "sink it down ten feet and blow the whole bank off with one shot. It's as easy as shooting fish."

"Why, you're down halfway, already!" she cried in amazement. "How long before you'll be done?"

"Oh, half an hour or so," said Denver. "Want to wait and see the blast? I learned this system on the railroad."

"You'll be through, then, before noon!" she exclaimed. "You're actually making money!"

"Well, a little," admitted Denver, "but of course, if you're not satisfied——"

"Oh, I'm satisfied," she protested, "I was only thinking—but then, it's always that way. There are some people, of course, who can make money anywhere. How does it feel to be a millionaire?"

"Fine!" grinned Denver, chugging away with his drill, "this is the way they all got their start. The arm-strong method—and that's where I shine; I can break more ground than any two men."

"Well, I believe you can," she responded frankly, "and I hope you have a great success. I didn't like it very well when you called me a quitter, but I can see now what you meant. Did you ever study music at all?"

Denver stopped his steady churning to glance at her quickly, and then he nodded his head.

"I played the violin before I went to mining. Had to quit then—it stiffens up your fingers."

"What a pity!" she cried. "But that explains about your records—I knew you'd heard good music somewhere."

"Yes, and I'm going to hear more," he answered impressively, "I'm not going to blow my money. I'm going back to New York, where all those singers live. The other boys can have the booze."

"Don't you drink at all?" she questioned eagerly. "Don't you even smoke? Well, I'm going right back and tell father. He told me that all miners spent their money in drinking—why wouldn't you come over to supper?"

She shot the question at him in the quick way she had, but Denver did not answer it directly.

"Never mind," he said, "but I will tell you one thing—I'm not a hobo miner."

"No, I knew you weren't," she responded quickly. "Won't you come over to supper to-night? I might sing for you," she suggested demurely; but Denver shook his head.

"Nope," he said, "your old man took me for a hobo and he can't get the idea out of his head. What did he say when you gave me this job?"

"Well, he didn't object; but I guess, if you don't mind, we'll only do three or four claims. He says I'll need the money back East."

"Yes, you will," agreed Denver. "Five hundred isn't much. If I was flush I'd do this for nothing."

"Oh, no," she protested, "I couldn't allow that. But if there *should* be a rush, and father's claims should be jumped——"

"You'd have the best of them, anyway. I wouldn't tempt old Murray too far."

"No," she said, "and that reminds me—I hear that he's made a strike. But say, here's a good joke on the professor. You know he thinks he's a mining expert, and he's been crazy to look at the diamond-drill cores; and the other day the boss driller was over and he told me how he got rid of him. You know, in drilling down they run into cavities where the lime has been leached away, and in order to keep the bore intact they pour them full of cement. Well, when the professor insisted upon seeing the core and wouldn't take no for an answer, Mr. Menzger just gave him a section of concrete where they'd bored through a filled-up hole. And Mr. Diffenderfer just looked so wise and examined it through his microscope, and then he said it was very good rock and an excellent indication of copper. Isn't that just too rich for anything?"

"Yeh," returned Denver with a thin-lipped smile. And then, before he thought how it sounded: "Say, who is this Mr. Menzger, anyway?"

"Oh, he's a friend of ours," she answered, drooping her eyelashes coquettishly. "He gets lonely sometimes and comes down to hear me sing—he's been in New York and everywhere."

"Yes, he must be a funny guy," observed Denver mirthlessly. "Any relation to that feller they call Dave?"

"Oh, Mr. Chatworth? No, he's from Kentucky—they say he's the last of his family. All the others were killed in one of those mountain feuds—Mr. Menzger says he's absolutely fearless."

"Well, what did he leave home for, then?" inquired Denver arrogantly. "He don't look very bad to me. I guess if he was fearless he'd be back in Kentucky, shooting it out with the rest of the bunch."

"No, it seems that his father on his dying bed commanded him to leave the country, because there were too many of the others against him. But Mr. Menzger tells me he's a professional killer, and that's why old Murray hired him. Do you think they would jump our claims?"

"They would if they struck copper," replied Denver bluntly. "And old Murray warned me not to buy from your father—that shows he's got his eye on your property. It's a good thing we're doing this work."

"Weren't you afraid, then?" she asked, putting the wonder note into her voice and laying aside her frank manner, "weren't you afraid to buy our claim? Or did you feel that you were guided to it, and all would be for the best?"

"That's it!" exclaimed Denver suddenly putting down his drill to gaze into her innocent young eyes, "I was guided, and so I bought it anyhow."

"Oh, I think it's so romantic!" she murmured with a sigh, "won't you tell me how it happened?"

And then Denver Russell, forgetting the seeress' warning at the very moment he was discussing her, sat down on a rock and gave Drusilla the whole story of his search for the gold and silver treasure. But at the end—when she questioned him about the rest of the prophecy—he suddenly recalled Mother Tragedy's admonition: "Beware how you reveal your affection or she will confer her hand upon another."

A shadow came into his eager blue eyes and his boyish enthusiasm was stilled; and Drusilla, who had been practicing her stage-learned wiles, suddenly found her technique at fault. She chattered on, trying subtly to ensnare him, but Denver's heart was now of adamant, and he failed to respond to her approaches. It was not too late yet to heed the words of the prophecy, and he drilled on in thoughtful silence.

"Don't you get lonely?" she burst out at

last, "living all by yourself in that cave? Why, even these old prospectors have to have some pardner—don't you ever feel the need of a friend?"

There it was—he felt it coming—the appeal to be just friends. But another girl had tried it already, and he had learned about women from her.

"No," he said shortly, "I don't need no friends. Say, I'm going to load this hole now."

"Well, go on!" she challenged, "I'm not afraid. I'll stay here as long as you do."

"All right," he said, lowering his powder down the hole and tamping it gently with a stick, "I see I can't scare *you*."

"Oh, you thought you could scare me!" she burst out mockingly, "I suppose you're a great success with the girls?"

"Well," he mocked back, "a good-looking feller like me—" And then he paused and grinned slyly.

"Oh, what's the use!" she exclaimed, rising up in disgust, "I might as well quit, right now."

"No, don't go off mad!" he remonstrated gallantly. "Stay and see the big explosion."

"I don't care *that* for your explosion!" she answered pettishly, and snapped her finger in the air.

It was the particular gesture with which the coquettish Carmen was wont to dismiss her lovers; but as she strode down the hill Drusilla herself was heartbroken, for her coquetry had come to naught. This big Western boy, this unsophisticated miner, had sensed her wiles and turned them upon her—how then could she hope to succeed? If her eyes had no allure for a man like him, how could she hope to fascinate an audience? And Carmen and half the heroines of modern light opera were all of them incorrigible flirts. They flirted with servants, with barbers, with strolling actors, with their own and other women's husbands; until the whole atmosphere fairly reeked of intrigue, of amours and coquettish escapades. To the dark-eyed Europeans these wiles were instinctive, but with her they were an art, to be acquired laboriously as she had learned to dance and sing. But flirt she could not, for Denver Russell had flouted her, and now she had lost his respect.

A tear came to her eye, for she was beginning to like him, and he would think that she flirted with every one; yet how was she to learn to succeed in her art if she had no

experience with men? It was that, in fact, which her teacher had hinted at when he had told her to go out and live; but her heart was not in it, she took no pleasure in deceit—and yet she longed for success. She could sing the parts, she had learned her French and Italian and taken instruction in acting; but she lacked the verve, the passionate abandon, without which she could never succeed. Yet succeed she must, or break her father's heart and make his great sacrifice a mockery. She turned and looked back at Denver Russell, and that night she sang—for him.

He was up there in his cave looking down indifferently. She sang, attired in filmy garments, by the light of the big, glowing lamp; and as her voice took on a passionate tenderness, her mother looked up from her work. Then Bunker awoke from his gloomy thoughts and glanced across at his wife; and they sat there in silence while she sang on and on, the gayest, sweetest songs that she knew. But Drusilla's eyes were fixed on the open doorway, on the darkness which lay beyond; and at last she saw him, a dim figure in the distance, a presence that moved and was gone. She paused and glided off into her song of songs, the Barcarole from "Tales of Hoffmann" and as her voice floated out to him Denver rose up from his hiding and stepped boldly into the moonlight. He stood there like a hero in some Wagnerian opera, where men take the parts of gods, and as she gazed the mockery went out of her song and she sang of love alone. Such a love as women know who love one man forever and hold all his love in return, yet the words were the same as those of false *Giuletta* when she fled with the perfidious *Dapertutto*.

"Night divine, O night of love,
O smile on our enchantment
Moon and stars keep watch above
This radiant night of love!"

She floated away in the haunting chorus, overcome by the madness of its spell; and when she awoke the song was ended and love had claimed her too.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIEND.

A new spirit, a strange gladness had come over Drusilla, and parts which had been difficult became suddenly easy when she took up her work the next day; but when she walked out in the cool of the evening

the sombrero and boys' boots were gone. She wore a trailing robe, such as great ladies wear when they go to keep a tryst with knightly lovers, and she went up the trail to where Denver was working on the last of her father's claims. He was up on the high cliff, busily tamping the powder that was to blast out the side of the hill, and she waited patiently until he had fired it and come down the slope with his tools.

"That makes four," he said, "and I'm all out of powder." But she only answered with a smile.

"I'll have to wait, now," he went on bluffly, "until McGraw comes up again, before I can do any more work."

"Yes," she answered and smiled again; a slow, expectant smile.

"What's the matter?" he demanded, and then his face changed and he fumbled with the strap of his canteen. But when he looked up his eyes met hers and there was no longer any secret between them.

"You can rest a few days, then," she suggested softly. "I'd like to hear some of your records."

"Yes—sure, sure," he burst out hastily, and they walked down the trail together. She went on ahead with the quick step of a dancer, and Denver looked up at an eagle in the sky as if in some way it could understand. But the eagle soared on without effort and without ceasing, and Denver could only be glad. In some way, far beyond him, she had divined his love; but it was not to be spoken of—now. That would spoil it all, the days of sweet communion, the pretense that nothing had changed; yet they knew it had changed and in the sharing of that great secret lay the tie that should bind them together. Denver looked from the eagle to the glorious woman and remembered the prophecy again. Even yet he must beware, he must veil every glance, treat her still like a simple country child; for the seeress had warned him that his fate hung in the balance and she might still confer her hand upon another.

In the happy days that followed he did no more work further than to sack his ore and ship it; but all his thoughts were centered upon Drusilla who was friendly and elusive by turns. On that first precious evening she came up with her father and inspected his smoke-blackened cave, and over his new records there sprang up a conversation that held him entranced for hours. She

had been to the Metropolitan and the Boston Opera Houses and heard the great singers at their best; she understood their language, whether it was French or Italian or the now proscribed German of Wagner, and she listened to the records again and again, trying to steal the secret of their success. But through it all she was gentle and friendly, and all her old quarrelsomeness was gone.

A week passed like a day, full of dreams and half-uttered confidences and long, contented silences; and then, as they sat in the shade of the giant sycamore, Denver let his eyes that had been fixed upon Drusilla stray and sweep the lower road.

"What are you looking for now?" she demanded impatiently, and he turned back with a guilty grin.

"McGraw," he said, and she frowned to herself for at last the world had come between them. For a week he had been idle, a Heaven-sent companion in the barren loneliness of life; but now, when his powder and mining supplies arrived, he would become the old, hard-working miner. He would go into his dark tunnel before the sun was up and not come out till it was low in the west, and instead of being clean and handsome as a young god he would come forth like a groveling gnome. His face would be grimy, his hands gnarled with striking, his digging clothes covered with candle grease: and his body would reek with salty sweat and the rank, muggy odor of powder fumes. And he would crawl back to his cave like an outworn beast of burden, to sleep while she sang to him from below.

"Will you go back to work?" she asked at last, and he nodded and stretched his great arms.

"Back to work!" he repeated, "and I guess it's about time. I wonder how much credit Murray gave me?"

Drusilla said nothing. She was looking far away and wondering at the thing we call life.

"Why do you work so hard?" she inquired half complainingly. "Is that all there is in the world?"

"No, lots of other things," he answered carelessly, "but work is the only way to get them. I'm on my way, see? I've just begun. You wait till I open up that mine?"

"Then what will you do?" she murmured pensively, "go ahead and open up another mine?"

"Well, I might," he admitted. "Don't you remember that other treasure? There's a gold mine around here, somewhere."

"Oh, is that all you think about?" she protested with a smile. "There are lots of other treasures, you know."

"Yes, but this one was prophesied," returned Denver doggedly. "I'm bound to find it, now."

"But Denver," she insisted, "don't you see what I mean? These fortune tellers never tell you, straight out. Yours said, 'a golden treasure,' but that doesn't mean a gold mine. There are other treasures, besides."

"For instance?" he suggested, and she looked far away as if thinking of some she might name.

"Well," she said at length, "there are opals, for one. They are beautiful, and look like golden fire. Or it might be a rare old violin that would bring back your music again. I saw one once that was golden yellow—wouldn't you like to play while I sang? But if you spend all your life trying to grub out more riches you will lose your appreciation of art."

"Yes, but wait," persisted Denver, "I'm just getting started. I haven't got a dollar to my name. If Murray don't send me the supplies that I ordered I'll have to go to work for my grub. The jewels can wait, and the yellow violins, but I know that she meant a mine. It would have to be a mine or I couldn't choose between them—and when I make my stake I'm going to buy out the professor and see what he's got underground. Of course it's only a stringer now, but—"

"Oh, dear," sighed Drusilla, and then she rose up, but she did not go away. "Aren't you glad," she asked, "that we've had this week together? I suppose I'm going to miss you, now. That's the trouble with being a woman—we get to be so dependent. Can I play over your records, sometimes?"

"Sure," said Denver. "Say, I'm going up there now to see if McGraw isn't in sight. Would you like to come along, too? We can sit outside in the shade and watch for his dust, down the road."

"Well, I ought to be studying," she assented reluctantly, "but I guess I can go up—for a while."

They clambered up together over the ancient, cliff dwellers' trail, where each foothold was worn deep in the rock; but as they sat within the shadow of the beetling cliff Drusilla sighed again.

"Do you think," she asked, "that there will be a great rush when they hear about your strike down in Moroni? Because then I'll have to go—I can't practice the way I have been with the whole town filled up with miners. And everything will be changed—I'd almost rather it wouldn't happen, and have things the way they are now. Of course, I'll be glad for father's sake, because he's awfully worried about money; but sometimes I think we're happier the way we are than we will be when we're all of us rich. What will be the first thing you'll do?"

"Well," began Denver, his eyes still on the road, "the first thing is to open her up. There's no use trying to interest outside capital until you've got some ore in sight. Then I'll go over to Globe to a man that I know and come back with a hundred thousand dollars. That's right—I know him well, and he knows me—and he's told me repeatedly if I find anything big enough he's willing to put that much into it. He came up from nothing, just an ordinary miner, but now he's got money in ten different banks, and a hundred thousand dollars is nothing to him. But his time is valuable, can't stop to look at prospects; so the first thing I do is to open up that mine until I can show a big deposit of copper. The silver and lead will pay all the expenses—and you wait, when that ore gets down to the smelter I'll bet there'll be somebody coming up here. It runs a thousand ounces to the ton or I'm a liar, the way I've sorted it out; but of course old Murray and the rest of 'em will rob me; I don't expect more than three hundred dollars."

"Isn't it wonderful," murmured Drusilla, "and to think it all happened just from having your fortune told! I'm going over to Globe before I start back East and get her to tell my fortune, too; but of course it can't be as wonderful as yours—you must have been just born lucky."

"Well, maybe I was," said Denver with a shrug, "but it isn't all over yet—I still stand a chance to lose. And she told me some other things that are not so pleasant—sometimes I wish I'd never gone near her."

"Oh, what are they?" she asked in a hushed, eager voice; but Denver ignored the question. Never, not even to his dearest friend, would he tell the forecasting of his death; and as for dearest friends, if he ever had another partner he could never trust

him a minute. The chance slipping of a pick, a missed stroke with a hammer, any one of a thousand trivial accidents, and the words of the prophecy would come to pass—he would be killed before his time. But if he favored one man no more than another, if he avoided his former partners and friends, then he might live to be one of the biggest mining men in the country and to win Drusilla for his wife.

"I'll tell you," he said meditatively, "you'd better keep away from her. A man does better without it. Suppose she'd tell you, for instance, that you'd get killed in a cave like she did Jack Chambers over in Globe; you'd be scared then, all the time you were under ground—it ruins a man for a miner. No, it's better not to know it at all. Just go ahead, the best you know how, and play your cards to win, and I'll bet it won't be but a year or two until you're a regular operatic star. They'll be selling your records for three dollars apiece, and all those managers will be bidding for you; but if Mother Trigedgo should tell you some bad news it might hurt you—it might spoil your nerve."

"Oh, did she tell you something?" cried Drusilla apprehensively. "Do tell me what it was! I won't breathe it to a soul; and if you could share it with some friend, don't you think it would ease your mind?"

Denver looked at her slowly, then he turned away and shook his head in refusal.

"Oh, Denver!" she exclaimed as she sensed the significance of it, and before he knew it she was patting his work-hardened hand. "I'm sorry," she said, "but if ever I can help you I want you to let me know. Would it help to have me for a friend?"

"A friend!" he repeated, and then he drew back and the horror came into his eyes. She was his friend already, the dearest friend he had—she was destined then to kill him!

"No!" he said, "I don't want any friends. Come on, I believe that's McGraw."

He rose up hastily and held out his hand to help her, but she refused to accept his aid. Her lips were trembling, there were tears in her eyes and her breast was beginning to heave; but there was no explanation he could give. He wanted her, yes, but not as a friend—as his beloved, his betrothed, his wife! By any name, but not by the name of friend. He drew away slowly as her head bowed to her knees; and at last he left her, weeping. It was best, after all,

for how could he comfort her? And he could see McGraw's dust down the road.

"I'm going to meet McGraw!" he called back from the steps, and went bounding off down the trail.

CHAPTER XVII.

BROKE.

McGraw, the freighter, was a huge, silent man from whom long years on the desert had almost taken the desire for speech. He came jangling up the road, his wagons grinding and banging, his horses straining wearily in their collars; and as Denver ran to meet him he threw on the brakes and sat blinking solemnly at his inquisitor.

"Where's my powder?" demanded Denver, looking over the load, "and say, didn't you bring that coal? I don't see that steel I ordered, either!"

"No," said McGraw and then, after a silence: "Murray wouldn't receive your ore."

"Wouldn't receive it!" yelled Denver, "why, what was the matter with it—did the sacks get broke going down?"

"No," answered McGraw, "the sacks were all right. He said the ore was no good."

"Like hell!" scoffed Denver. "That ore that I sent him? It would run a thousand ounces to the ton!"

McGraw wrinkled his brows and looked up at the sun.

"Well," he said, "I guess I'll be going."

"But—hey, wait!" commanded Denver, scarcely believing his ears, "didn't he send me any grub, or anything?"

"Nope," answered McGraw, "he wouldn't give me nawthin'. He said the ore was no good. Come, boys!" And he threw off the brakes with a bang.

The chains tightened with a jerk, the wheelers set their feet; then the lead wagon heaved forward, the trail wagon followed, and Denver was alone on the road. His brain was in a whirl, he had lost all volition, even the will to control his wild thoughts; until suddenly he burst out in a fit of cursing—of Murray, of McGraw, of everything. McGraw had been a fool, he should have demanded the supplies anyway; and Murray was just trying to job him. He knew he was broke and had not had the ore assayed, and he was taking advantage of the fact. He had refused the ore in order to leave him flat and compel him to abandon his mine;

and then he, Murray, would slip over with his gunman and take possession himself. Denver struck his leg and looked up and down the road, and then he started off for Moroni.

It was sixty miles, across a scorching desert with only two wells on the road; but Denver arrived at Whitlow's an hour after sunset, and he was at Desert Wells before dawn. A great fire seemed to consume him, to drive him on, to fill his body with inexhaustible strength; and, against the advice of the station man, he started on in the heat for Moroni. All he wanted was a showdown with Bible-back Murray, to meet him face to face; and no matter if he had the whole county in his pocket he would tell him what he thought of him. And he would make him take that ore, according to his agreement, or answer to him personally; and then he would return to Pinal, where he had left Drusilla crying. But he could not face her now after all his boasting and his tales of fabulous wealth. He could never face her again.

The sun rose up higher, the heat waves began to shimmer and the landscape to blur before his eyes; and then an automobile came thundering up behind him and halted on the flat.

"Get in!" called the driver, throwing the door open hospitably; and in an hour's time Denver was set down in Moroni, but with the fever still hot in his brain. His first frenzy had left him, and the heat madness of the desert with its insidious promptings to violence; but the sense of injustice still rankled deep and he headed for Murray's store. It was a huge, brick building crowded from basement to roof with groceries and general merchandise. Busy clerks hustled about, waiting on Mexicans and Indians and slow-moving, valley ranchers; and as Denver walked in there was a man there to meet him and direct him to any department. It showed that Bible Back was efficient, at least.

"I'd like to see Mr. Murray," announced Denver shortly, and the floorwalker glanced at him again before he answered that Mr. Murray was out. It was the same at the bank, and out at his house; and at last in disgust Denver went down to the station, where he had been told his ore was lying. The stifling heat of the valley oppressed him like a blanket, the sweat poured down his face in tiny streams; and at each evasion his

answer mounted higher until now he was talking to himself. It was evident that Murray was trying to avoid him—he might even have started back to the mine—but his ore was there, on a heavily timbered platform, where it could be transferred from wagon to car without lifting it up and down. There was other ore there too, each consignment by itself, taken in by the storekeeper in exchange for supplies and held to make up a carload. The same perfect system, efficiency in all things—efficiency and a hundred per cent profit.

Denver leaped up on the platform and cut open a sack, but as he was pouring a generous sample of the ore into his handkerchief a man stepped out of the next warehouse.

"Hey!" he called, "what are you doing, over there? You get down and leave that ore alone!"

"Go to hell!" returned Denver, tying a knot in his handkerchief, and the man came over on the run.

"Say!" he threatened, "you put that ore back or you'll find yourself in serious trouble."

"Oh, I will, hey?" replied Denver with his most tantalizing smile. "Whose ore do you think this is, anyway?"

"It belongs to Mr. Murray, and you'd better put it back or I'll report the matter at once."

"Well, report it," answered Denver. "My name is Denver Russell, and I'm taking this up to the assayer."

"There's Mr. Murray, now," exclaimed the man, and as Denver looked up he saw a yellow automobile churning rapidly along through the dust. Murray himself was at the wheel and, sitting beside him, was another man equally familiar—it was Dave, his hired gunman.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Russell?" demanded Murray with asperity, and Denver became suddenly calm. Old Murray had been hiding from him, but they had summoned him by telephone, and he had brought along Dave for protection. But that should not keep him from having his way and forcing Murray to a show-down.

"I just came down for a sample of that ore I sent you," answered Denver with a sarcastic grin. "McGraw said you claimed it was no good, so I thought I'd have it assayed."

"Oh," observed Murray, and for a minute he sat silent while Dave and Denver exchanged glances. The gunman was slight and insignificant looking, with small features and high, bony cheeks; but there was a smoldering hate in his deep-set eyes which argued him in no mood for a jest, so Denver looked him over and said nothing.

"Very well," said Murray at last, "the ore is yours. Go ahead and have it assayed. But with the price of silver down to forty-five cents, I doubt if that stuff will pay smelter charges. I'll ship it, if you say so, along with this other, if only to make up a carload; but it will be at your own risk, and if the returns show a deficit your mine will be liable for the balance."

"Oh, that's the racket, eh?" suggested Denver. "You've got your good eye on my mine. Well, I'd just like to tell you——"

"No, I haven't!" snapped back Murray, his voice harsh and strident, "I wouldn't accept your mine as a gift. Your silver is practically worthless and there's no copper in the district; as I know all too well, to my sorrow. I've lost twenty thousand dollars on better ground than yours and ordered the whole camp closed down—that shows how much I want your mine."

He started his engine and glided on to the warehouse, and Denver stood staring down the road. Then he raised his sample, tied up in his handkerchief, and slammed it into the dirt. His mine was valueless unless he had money, and Murray had abandoned the district. More than ever, Denver realized how much it had meant to him merely to have that diamond drill running and a big man like Murray behind it. It was indicative of big values and great expectations; but now, with Murray out of the running, the district was absolutely dead. There was no longer the chance of a big copper strike, such as had been rumored repeatedly for weeks, to bring on a stampede and make every claim in the district worth thousands of dollars as a gamble.

No, Pinal was dead; the Silver Treasure was worthless; and he, Denver Russell, was broke. He had barely the price of a square meal. He started uptown, and turned back toward the warehouse where Murray was wrangling with his hireling; then, cursing with helpless rage, he swung off down the railroad track and left his broken dreams behind him.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE HAND OF FATE.

The swift hand of Fate, which had hurled Denver from the heights of hope into the depths of dark despair, suddenly snatched him up out of the abyss again and whisked him back to Globe. When he walked out of Moroni his mind was a blank, so overcome was his body with heat and toil and the astounding turns of his fortune; but at the next station below, as he was trying to steal a ride, a man had dropped off the train and dragged him, willy-nilly, into his Pullman. It was a mining superintendent who had seen him in action when he was timbering the Last Chance stope, and in spite of his protests he paid his fare to Globe and put him to work down a shaft.

At the bottom of this shaft was millions of dollars' worth of copper and level after level of expensive workings; and some great stirring of the earth was cutting it off, crushing the bottle off at the neck. Every night, every shift, the swelling ground moved in, breaking stulls and square sets like tooth-picks; and now with solid steel and quick-setting concrete they were fighting for the life of the mine. It was a dangerous job, such as few men cared to tackle; but to Denver it was a relief, a return to his old life after the delirium of an ugly dream. Even yet, he could not trace the flaw in his reasoning which had brought him to earth with such a thump; but he knew, in general, that his error was the common one of trying to run a mine on a shoe string. He had set up in business as a mining magnate on eight hundred dollars and his nerve, and Bible-back Murray had "busted" him.

Upon that point, at least, Denver suffered no delusion; he knew that his downfall had been planned from the first and that he had bit like a sucker at the bait. Murray had dropped a few words and spit on the hook and Denver had shipped him his ore. The rest, of course, was like shooting fish in the Panhandle—he had refused to buy the ore, leaving Denver belly up, to float away with other human débris. But there was one thing yet that he could not understand—why had Murray closed down his own mine? That was pulling it pretty strong, just to freeze out a little prospector and rob him of a ton or two of ore; and yet Denver had proof that it was true. He had staked a hobo who had come over the trail and

the hobo had told him what he knew. The diamond-drill camp was closed down and all the men had left, but the guard was still herding the property. And the hobo had seen a girl at Pinal. She was easy to look at, but hard to talk to, so he had passed and hit the trail for Globe.

Denver worked like a demon with a gang of Cousin Jacks, opposing the swelling ground with lengths of railroad steel and pouring in the concrete behind them; but all the time, by fits and snatches, the old memories would press in upon him. He would think of Mother Trigedgo and her glowing prophecies, which had turned out so wonderfully up to a certain point and then had as suddenly gone wrong; and then he would think of the beautiful artist with whom he was fated to fall in love, and how, even there, his destiny had worked against him and led him to sacrifice her love. For how could one hope to win the love of a woman if he denied her his friendship first? And yet, if he accepted her as his dearest friend, he would simply be inviting disaster.

It was all wrong, all foolish—he dismissed it from his mind as unworthy of a thinking man—yet the words of the prophecy popped up in his head like the memories of some evil dream. His hopes of sudden riches were blasted forever, he had given up the thought of Drusilla; but the one sinister line recurred to him constantly—"at the hand of your dearest friend." Never before in his life had he been without a partner, to share his ramblings and adventures, but now in that black hole with the steel rails coming down and death on every hand, superstition overmastered him and he rebuffed the hardy Cornishmen, refusing to take any man for his friend. Nor would he return to Mother Trigedgo's boarding house, for her prophecies had ruined his life.

He worked on for a week, trying to set his mind at rest, and then a prompting came over him suddenly to go back and see Drusilla. If death must come, if some friend must kill him, in whose hands would he rather intrust his life than in those of the woman he loved? Perhaps it was all false, like the rest of the prophecy, the gold and silver treasures and the rest; and if he was brave he might win her at last and have her for more than a friend. But how could he face her, after all he had said, after boasting as he had of his fortune? And he had refused her friendship, when she had endeav-

ored to comfort him and to exorcise this fear devil that pursued him. He went back to work, determined to forget it all, but that evening he drew his time. It came to ninety dollars, for seven shifts and overtime, and they offered him double to stay; but the desire to see Drusilla had taken possession of him and he turned his face toward Pinal.

It was early in the morning when he rode out of Globe and took the trail over the divide; and as he spurred up a hill he overtook another horseman who looked back and grinned at him wisely.

"Going to the strike?" he asked, and Denver's heart leaped though he kept his quirt and spurs working.

"What strike?" he said, and the man burst into a laugh as if sensing a hidden jest.

"That's all right," he answered, "I guess you're hep—they say it runs forty per cent copper."

"How'd you hear about it?" inquired Denver, fishing cautiously for information. "Where you going—over to Pinal?"

"You're whistling," returned the man, quite off his guard. "Say, stake me a claim when you get there, if old Bible Back hasn't jumped them all."

"Say, what are you talking about?" demanded Denver, suddenly reining in his horse. "Is Murray jumping claims?"

"Never mind!" replied the man, shutting up like a clam, and Denver spurred on and left him.

There was a strike then in Pinal, old Murray had tapped the vein and it ran up to forty per cent copper! That would make the claim that Denver had abandoned the week before worth thousands and thousands of dollars. It would make him rich and Bunker Hill rich and—yes, it would prove the prophecy! He had chosen the silver treasure and the gold treasure had been added to it—for the copper ore which had come in later was almost the color of gold. As old Bunk had said, all these prophecies were symbolical, and he had done Mother Triggedgo an injustice. And there was one claim that he knew of—yes, and four others, too—that Murray would never jump. That was his own Silver Treasure and the four claims of Bunker's that he had done the annual work on himself.

Denver's heart leaped again as he raced his horse across the flats and led him scrambling with haste up the steep hills, and before the sun was three hours high he had

plunged into the box cañon of Queen Creek. Here the trail wound in and out, crossing and recrossing the shrunken stream and mounting with painful zigzags over the points; but he rioted through it all, splashing the water out of the crossings as he hurried to claim his own. The box cañon grew deeper, the walls more precipitous, the creek bottom more dark and cavernous; until at last it opened out into broad flats and boulder patches, thickly covered with alders and ash trees. And then as he swung around the final, rocky point he saw his own claim in the distance. It was nothing but a hole in the side of the rocky hillside, a slide of gray waste down the slope; but to him it was a beacon to light his home-coming, a proof that some dreams do come true. He galloped down the trail where Drusilla and he had loitered, and let out an exultant whoop.

But as Denver came opposite his mine a sinister thing happened—a head rose up against the black darkness of the tunnel and a man looked stealthily out. Then he drew back his head like some snake in a hole, and Denver stopped and stared. A low wall of rocks had been built across the cut and the man was crouching behind it—Denver jogged down and turned up the trail. A glimpse at Pinal showed the streets full of automobiles and a huddle of men by the store door, and as he rode up toward his mine Bunker Hill came running out and beckoned him frantically back.

"Come back here!" he shouted, and Denver turned and looked at him, but kept on up the narrow trail. The mine was his, without a doubt, both by purchase and by assessment work done; and he had no fear of dispossession by a jumper who was so obviously in the wrong.

"Hello, there!" he hailed, reining in before the tunnel; and after a minute the man rose up with his pistol poised over his shoulder. It was Dave, Murray's gunman, and at sight of his enemy Denver was swept with a gust of passion. From the moment he had first met him, this narrow-eyed, sneering bad man had roused all the hate that was in him; but now it had gone beyond instinct. He found him in adverse possession of his property and with a gun raised ready to shoot.

"What are you doing here?" demanded Denver insolently, but Chatwourth did not move. He stood like a statue, his gun bal-

anced in the air, a thin, evil smile on his lips, and Denver gave way to his fury. "You get out of there!" he ordered. "Get off my property! Get off or I'll put you off!"

Chatworth twirled his gun in a contemptuous gesture; and then, like a flash, he was shooting. He threw his shots low, between the legs of the horse, which reared and whirled in a panic; and with the bang of the heavy gun in his ears, Denver found himself headed down the trail. A high derisive yell, a whoop of hectoring laughter, followed after him as he galloped into the open; and he was fighting his horse in a cloud of dust when Bunker Hill and the crowd came up.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE MAN-KILLER.

"Did he hit ye?" yelled Bunker when Denver had conquered his pitching horse and set him back on his haunches. "Hell's bells, boy, I told you to stay out of there!"

"Well, you lend me a gun!" shouted Denver in a fury, "and I'll go back and shoot it out with that dastard! It's him or me—that's all!"

"Here's a gun, pardner," volunteered a long-bearded prospector handing up a six-shooter with tremulous eagerness; but Bunker Hill struck the long pistol away and took Denver's horse by the bit.

"Not by a jugful, old-timer," he said to the prospector. "Do you want to get the kid killed? Come on back to the meeting and we'll frame up something on these jumpers that'll make 'em hunt their holes. But this boy here is my friend, understand?"

He held the prancing horse, which had been spattered with glancing lead, until Denver swung down out of the saddle; and then, while the crowd followed along at their heels, he led the way back to the store.

"What's going on here?" demanded Denver, looking about at the automobiles and the men who had popped up like magic. "Has Murray made a strike?"

"Danged right," answered Bunker, "he made a strike last month—and now he has jumped all our claims. Or at least, it's his men, because Dave there's the leader; but Murray claims they're working for themselves. He's over at his camp with a big gang of miners, driving a tunnel in to tap the deposit—it run forty per cent pure copper."

"Well, we're made then," exulted Denver, "if we can get back our claims. Come on, let's run these jumpers off!"

"Yes, that's what I said, a few hours ago," grumbled Bunker biting savagely at his mustache, "and I never was so hacked in my life. We went up to this Dave and all pulled our guns and ordered him out of the district, and I'm a dad-burned Mexican if he didn't pull *his* gun and run the whole bunch of us away. He's nervy, there's no use talking; and I promised Mrs. Hill that I'd keep out of these shooting affairs. By grab, it was downright disgraceful!"

"That's all right," returned Denver, "he don't look bad to me. You just lend me a gun and——"

"He'll kill ye!" warned Bunker, "I know by his eye. He's a killer if ever there was one. So don't go up against him unless you mean business, because you can't run no blazer on him!"

"Well—oh hell, then," burst out Denver, "what's the use of getting killed! Isn't there anything else we can do? I don't need to eject him because he's got no title, anyway. How about these lead-pencil fellows that haven't done their work for years?"

"That's it," explained Bunker, "we were having a meeting when we seen you horn in on Dave. These gentlemen are all men that have held their ground for years and it don't seem right they should lose it. At the same time it'll take something more than a slap on the wrist to make these blasted jumpers let go. They've staked all the good claims and are up doing the work on them and the question is—what can we do?"

"I'll tell you what I'll do," spoke up the old prospector vindictively as the crowd surged into the store, "I'll get up on the Leap and shoot down on them jumpers until I chase the last one of 'em off. They can't run no rannikaboo on me!"

He wagged his long beard and spat impressively, but nobody paid any attention to him. They realized at last that they were up against gun fighters—men picked for quick shooting and iron nerves and working under the orders of one man. That man was Dave Chatworth, nominally dismissed by Murray, but undoubtedly still in his pay, and until they could devise some plan to eliminate him it was useless to talk of violence. So they resumed their meeting and, as Denver owned a claim, he found himself included in the membership. It was

a belated revival of the old-time Miners' Meeting, at one time the supreme law in Western mining camps; and Bunker Hill, as recorder of the district, presided from his perch on the counter.

From his seat in the corner Denver listened apathetically as the miners argued and wrangled, and the longer they talked the more it became apparent that nothing was going to be done. The encounter with Dave had cooled their courage, and more and more the sentiment began to lean toward an appeal to the power of the law. But then it came out that the law was an instrument which might operate as a two-edged sword; for possession, and diligence in working the claim, are the two big points in mining law, and just at that moment a legal decision would be all in favor of the jumpers. And if Murray was behind them, as all the circumstances seemed to indicate, he would hire the most expensive lawyers in the country and fight the case to a finish. No, if anything was to be done they must find out some other way, or they would be playing right into his hands.

"I'll tell you," proposed Bunker as the talk swung back to action, "let's go back unarmed and talk to Dave again and find out what he thinks he's doing. He can't hold Denver's claim, and those claims of mine, because the work has just been done; and then, if we can talk him into vacating our ground, maybe these other jaspers will quit."

"I'll go you!" said Denver, rising up impatiently, "and if he won't vacate my claim I'll try some other means and see if we can't persuade him."

"That's the talk!" quavered the old prospector slapping him heartily on the back. "Lord love you, boy, if I was your age I'd be right up in front there, shooting. Why, up in the Bradshaws in '73—"

"Never mind what you'd do if you had the nerve," broke in Bunker Hill sarcastically. "Just because you've got a claim that you'd like to get back is no reason for stirring up trouble. No, I'm willing to go ahead and do all the talking; but I want you to understand—this is *peaceable*."

"Well, all right," agreed the miners and, laying aside their pistols, they started up the street for Denver's mine; but as Bunker led off a voice called from the porch and his wife came hurrying after him. Behind her followed Drusilla, reluctantly at first; but as

her father kept on, despite the entreaties of her mother, she ran up and caught him by the sleeve.

"No, don't go, father!" she cried appealingly, and as Bunker replied with an evasive laugh she turned her anger upon Denver.

"Why don't you get back your own mine?" she demanded, "instead of dragging my father into it?"

"Never mind, now," protested Bunker, "we ain't going to have no trouble—we just want to have a friendly talk. This has nothing to do with Denver or his mine—all we want is a few words with Dave."

"He'll shoot you!" she insisted. "Oh, I just know something will happen. Well, all right, then; I'm going along too!"

"Why, sure," smiled Bunker, "always glad to have company—but you'd better stay back with your mother."

"No, I'm going to stay right here," she answered stubbornly, giving Denver a hateful glance, "because I don't believe a word you say."

"Ve-ry well, my dear," responded Bunker indulgently, and took her under his arm.

"I'm going ahead!" she burst out quickly as they came to the turn in the trail; and before he could stop her she slipped out of his embrace and went running to the entrance of the cut. But there she halted suddenly, and when they came up they found her pale and trembling. "Oh, go back!" she gasped. "He's in there—he'll shoot you. I know something awful will happen!"

"You'd better go back, now," suggested her father quietly, and then he turned to the barrier. "Don't start anything, Dave—we've come peaceable, this time; so come out and let's have a talk."

There was a long, tense silence, and then the muzzle of a gun stirred uneasily and revealed the hiding place of Dave. He was crouched behind the rocks which he had piled up across the cut where it entered the slope of the hill, and his long-barreled six-shooter was thrust out through a crack just wide enough to serve for a loophole.

"Don't want to talk," he answered at last. "So go on, now; get off of my property."

"Well, now listen," began Bunker shaking off Drusilla's grasp, "we acknowledge we made a slight mistake. We tried to run a whizzer and you called us good and plenty—all right then, now let's have a talk. If you can show title to this ground you're holding, we'll leave you in peaceful posses-

sion; and if you can't, you're just wasting your time and talents, because there's plenty more claims that ain't took. It's a cinch you can't hide in that hole forever, so you might as well have it out now."

"Well, what d'ye want?" snarled Chatwourth irritably. "By cripes, I'll kill the first man that comes a step nearer. I won't stand no monkey business from nobody."

"Oh, sure, sure," soothed Bunker, "we know you're the goods—nerviest gunman, I believe, I ever saw. But here's the proposition; you ain't here for your health, you must figure on making a winning somehow. Well, if your title's good you've got a good mine, but if it ain't you're out of luck. Now I sold this claim for five hundred dollars to Mr. Russell, that you met a while ago; and we think it belongs to him yet. I gave him a clear title and he's done his work, so——"

"Your title was no good!" contradicted Chatwourth from his rock pile, "you hadn't done your work for years. I've located this claim, and the man don't live——"

"That's all right!" spoke up Denver, "but I located it before you did. I didn't *buy* this claim. I paid for a quitclaim and then re-located it myself—and my papers are on record in Moroni."

"Who called you in on this?" burst out Chatwourth abusively, rising up with his gun poised to shoot. "Now you git, dam' your heart, and if you say another word I'll——"

"You don't dare to shoot me!" answered Denver in a passion, standing firm as the crowd surged back. "I'm unarmed, and you don't dare to shoot me!"

"Here, here!" exclaimed Bunker grabbing hastily at Denver's arm, but Denver struck him roughly aside.

"Never mind, now," he said, "just get those folks away—I don't want any of my friends to get hurt. But I'll tell you right now, either I throw that man out or he'll have to shoot me down in cold blood."

He backed away panting and the miners ran for cover, but Bunker Hill held his ground.

"No, now listen, Denver," he admonished gently, "you don't know what you're doing. This man will kill you, as sure as hell."

"He will not!" cried Denver, grabbing up a heavy stone and advancing on the barricade, "I'm destined to be killed by my dearest friend—that's what old Mother Trigedgo

told me! But this buzzard ain't my friend and never was——"

He paused, for Chatwourth's gun came down and pointed straight at his heart.

"Stand back!" he shrilled, and Denver leaped forward hurling the rock with all his strength. Then he plunged through the smoke, swinging his arms out to clutch, and as he crashed through the barrier he stumbled over something that he turned back and pounced on like a cat. It was Chatwourth, but his body was limp and senseless—the stone had struck him in the head.

CHAPTER XX.

JUMPERS AND TENORS.

They led Denver away as if he were a child, for the revulsion from his anger left him weak; but Chatwourth, the killer, was carried back to town with his head lolling forward like a dead man's. The smash of the stone had caught him full on the forehead, which sloped back like the skull of a panther; and the blood, oozing down from his lacerated scalp, made him look more murderous than ever. But his hard, fighting jaw was hanging slack now and his dangerous eyes were closed; and the miners, while they carried him with a proper show of solicitude, chuckled and muttered among themselves. In a way which was nothing short of miraculous, Denver Russell had walked in on Murray's boss jumper and knocked him on the head with a stone—and the shot which Chatwourth had fired in return had never so much as touched him.

They put Chatwourth in an automobile and sent him over to Murray's camp; and then with broad smiles they gathered about Denver and took turns in slapping him on the back. He was a wonder, a terror, a proper fighting fool, the kind that would charge into hell itself with nothing but a bucket of water; and would he mind, when he felt a little stronger, just walking with them to their claims? Just a little, friendly jaunt, as one friend with another; but if Murray's hired jumpers saw him coming up the trail that was all that would be required. They would go, and be quick about it, for they had been watching from afar and had seen what happened to Dave—but Denver brushed them aside and went up to his cave where he could be by himself and think.

If he had ever doubted the virtue of

Mother Trigedgo's prophecy, he put the unworthy thought behind him. He knew it now, knew it absolutely—every word of the prophecy was true. He had staked his life to prove the blackest line of it, and Chatwourth's bullet had been turned aside. No, the silver treasure was his, and the golden treasure also, and no man but his best friend could kill him; but the beautiful artist with whom he had fallen in love—would she now confer her hand upon another? He had come back to Pinal to set the prophecy at defiance and ask her to be his dearest friend; but now, well, perhaps it would be just as well to stick to the letter of his oracle. "Beware how you reveal your affections," it said—and he had been rushing back to tell her! And besides, she had met his advances despitefully, and practically called him a coward. Denver brushed off the dust from his shiny phonograph and put on the Anvil Chorus.

The next morning, early, he was up at his mine, with Chatwourth's gun slung low on his leg; and while he remained there, to defend it against all comers, he held an impromptu reception. There was a rush of miners to look at the mine and inspect the specimens of copper; and then shoe-string promoters began to arrive, with proposals to stock the property. The professor came up, his eyes staring and resentful; and old Bunker, overflowing with good humor; and at last, when nobody else was there, Drusilla walked by on the trail. She glanced up at him hopelessly; then, finding no response, she heaved a great sigh and turned up his path to have it over and done with.

"Well," she said, "I suppose you despise me, but I'm sorry—that's all I can say. And now that I know all about your horoscope I don't blame you for treating me so rudely. That is, I don't blame you so much. But don't you think, Denver, when you went away and left me, you might have written back? We'd always been such friends."

She checked herself at the word, then smiled a sad smile and waited to hear what he would say. And Denver, in turn, checked what was on his lips and responded with a solemn nod. It had come to him suddenly to rise up and clasp her hands and whisper that he's taken a chance on it, yet—that is, if they could still be friends—but the significance of the prophecy had been proved only yesterday, and miracles can happen both ways. The same fate, the same des-

tiny, which had fended off the bullet when Chatwourth had aimed at his heart, might turn the merest accident to the opposite purpose and make Drusilla his unwilling slayer.

"Yes," he said, apropos of nothing, "you see now how I'm fixed. Don't dare to have any friends."

"No, but Denver," she pouted, "you might say you were sorry—that's different from being friends. But after we'd been so—oh, do you believe all that? Do you believe you'll be killed by your dearest friend, and that nobody else can harm you? Because that, you know, is just superstition; it's just like the ancient Greeks when they consulted the oracle, and the Indians, and such people. But educated people——"

"What's the matter with the Greeks?" spoke up Denver contentiously. "Do you mean to say they were ignorant? Well, I talked with an old-timer—he was a professor in some university—and he said it would take us a thousand years before we even caught up with them. Do you think that I'm superstitious? Well, listen to this, now; here's one that he told me, and it comes from a famous Greek play. There was a woman back in Greece that was like Mother Trigedgo, and she prophesied, 'before a man was born, that he'd kill his own father and marry his own mother. What do you think of that, now? His father was a king and didn't want to kill him so, when he was born he pierced his feet and put him out on a cliff to die. But a shepherd came along and found this baby and named him *Œdipus*, which means swelled feet; and when the kid grew up he was walking along a narrow pass when he met his father in disguise. They got into a quarrel over who should turn out and *Œdipus* killed his father. Then he went on to the city where his mother was queen and there was a big bird, the Sphinx, that used to come there regular and ask those folks a riddle: What is it that is four-footed, three-footed, and two-footed? And every time when they failed to give the answer the Sphinx would take one of them to eat. Well, the queen had said that whoever guessed that riddle could be king and have her for his wife, and *Œdipus* guessed the answer. It's a man, you see, that crawls when he is a baby, stands on two legs when he's grown and walks with a cane when he is old. *Œdipus* married the queen, but when he found out what he'd done he

went mad and put his own eyes out. But don't you see—he couldn't escape it."

"No, but listen," she smiled, "that was just a legend, and the Greeks made it into a play. It was just like the German stories of Thor and the Norse gods that Wagner used in his operas. They're wonderful, and all that, but folks don't take them seriously. They're just—why, they're fairy tales."

"Well, all right," grumbled Denver, "I expect you think I am crazy, but what about Mother Trigedgo? Didn't she send me over here to find this mine? And wasn't it right where she told me? Doesn't it lie within the shadow of a place of death, and wasn't the gold added to it?"

"Why, no!" exclaimed Drusilla, "did you find the gold, too? I thought——"

"That referred to the copper," answered Denver soberly. "It was your father that gave me the tip. When I first came over here I was inquiring for gold, because I knew I had to make a choice; but he pointed out to me that these horoscopes are symbolical, and that the golden treasure might be copper. It looks a whole lot like gold, you know; and now just look what happened! I chose the silver, see—I chose the right treasure—and when I drifted in, this vein of chalcopyrites appeared and was added to the silver. It followed along in the hanging wall until the whole formation dipped and then——"

"Oh, I don't care about that!" burst out Drusilla fretfully, "it's easy to explain anything, afterward! But of course if you think more of gold and silver than you do of having me for a friend——"

"But I don't," interposed Denver, gently taking her hand. "Sit down here and let's talk this over."

"Well," sighed Drusilla, and then, winking back the tears, she sank down in the shade beside him.

"I don't want you to think," went on Denver tenderly, without weighing very carefully what he said, "I don't want you to think I don't like you, because—say, if you'll kiss me, I'll take a chance."

"Oh—would you?" she beamed, her eyes big with wonder, "would you take a chance on my killing you?"

"If it struck me dead!" declared Denver gallantly, but she did not yield the kiss.

"No," she said, "I don't believe in kisses—have you kissed other girls before? And

besides, I just wanted to be friends again, the way we were before."

"Well, I guess you don't want to be friends very bad," observed Denver with a disgruntled smile. "When do you expect to start for the East?"

"Pretty soon," she answered. "Will you be sorry?"

Denver shrugged his shoulders and began snapping pebbles at an ant.

"Sure," he said, and she drew away from him.

"You won't!" she burst out resentfully.

"Yes, I'll be sorry," he repeated, "but it won't make much difference—I don't expect to last very long. I've always had a pardner, some feller to ramble around with and borrow all my money when he was broke, and I'm getting awful lonesome without one. Sooner or later, I reckon, I'll pick up another one and the crazy danged fool will kill me. Drop a timber hook on my head or some stunt like that—I wish I'd never seen old Mother Trigedgo! What you don't know never hurt any one; but now, by grab, I'm afraid of every man I throw in with. For the time being, at least, he's the best friend I've got; and—oh, what's the use, anyway, it'll get you, sooner or later—I might as well go out like a sport."

"You were awful brave," she murmured admiringly, "when you fought with Mr. Chatwourth yesterday. Weren't you honestly afraid he would kill you?"

"No, I wasn't!" declared Denver. "He didn't look bad to me—don't now and never did—and as long as the cards are coming my way I don't let no alleged bad man run it over me. Here's the gun that I took away from him."

"Yes, I noticed it," she said. "But when he comes back for it, are you going to give it up?"

"Sure," answered Denver, "just show me a rock pile and I'll run him out of town like a rabbit."

"And you fought him with *rocks*!" she said half to herself, "I wish I were as brave as that."

"Well, it's all in your mind," expounded Denver. "Some people are afraid to crack an egg, but I'm game to try anything once."

"So am I!" she defended, looking him boldly in the eye, but he shook his head and smiled.

"Nope," he said, "you don't believe in

kisses. But I was willing to take a chance on getting killed."

"No," she said, "a kiss means more than that. It means—well, it means that you love some one."

"It means what you want it to mean," he corrected. "Don't you have to kiss the tenor in these operas?"

"Well that's different," she responded blushing. "That's why I'm afraid I'll never succeed! Of course we're taught to do stage kisses, but somehow I can't bring myself to it. But oh, I do so love to sing! I like it all, except just that part of it—and the singers are not all nice men. Some of them just make a business of flattering pretty girls and offering to get them a hearing. That's why some girls succeed and get such big parts—they have an understanding with some one that can use his influence with the directors. They don't take the best singers and actors at all; it's all done by intrigue and money. Oh, I wish some real *nice* man would start a new company and invite me to take a part. I've heard one was being organized—a traveling company that will sing in all the big cities—and I've written to my music teacher about it. But if I don't get some position my money will all be gone in no time and then—well, what will I do?"

She looked at him bravely and he saw in her eyes the calmness that goes with desperation.

"You write to me," he said, "and I'll send you the last dollar I've got."

"No, I didn't mean that," she replied, "I can earn my living at something. But father and mother have spent all their money in training me to be a great singer, and I just can't bear to disappoint them. It's cost ten thousand dollars to bring me where I am, and this five hundred dollars is nothing. Why the great vocal teachers, who can use their influence to get their pupils a hearing, charge ten dollars for a half-hour lesson; and if I don't go to them then every door is closed—unless I'm willing to pay the price."

"Well, I take it all back then," spoke up Denver at last, "there are different kinds of bravery. But you go on back there and do your best and maybe we can make a raise. I'll just take my gun and go up to your father's claims and jump out that bunch of bad men—"

"Not No, Denver!" she broke in very earnestly, "I don't want you to do that

again. I heard last night that Dave said he would get you—and if he did, why then I'd be to blame. You'd be doing it for me, and if one of those men killed you—well, it would be just the same as me."

"Nope!" denied Denver, "there was no figure of speech about that. It said: 'At the *hands* of your dearest friend.' These jumpers ain't my friends and never was—come on, let's take a chance. I'll run 'em off the claims if your father will give you half of 'em, and then you can turn around and sell out for cash and go back to New York like a queen. You stand off the tenors and I'll stand off the jumpers; and then, perhaps—but we won't talk about that now. Come on, will you shake hands on the deal?"

She looked at him questioningly, his powerful hand reached out to help her, the old, boyish laughter in his eyes, and then she smiled back as bravely.

"All right," she said, "but you'll have to be careful—because now I'm your dearest friend."

"I'm game," he cried, "and you don't have to kiss me either. But if some dago tenor—"

"No," she promised, looking up at him wistfully. "I'll—I'll save the kiss for you."

CHAPTER XXI.

BROKE AGAIN.

The industry of four jumpers, digging in like gophers on the best of Bunker Hill's claims, was brought to an abrupt termination by the appearance of one man with a gun. He came on unconcernedly, Dave's six-shooter at his hip and the strength of a lion in his stride; and the first of the gunmen, after looking him over, jumped out of his hole and made off. Denver tore down his notice and posted the old one, with a copy of his original affidavit that the annual work had been done; and when he toiled up to the remaining three claims the jumpers had fled before him. They knew him all too well, and the gun at his hip; and they counted it no disgrace to give way before the man who had conquered Dave Chatworth with stones. So Denver changed the notices and came back laughing and Bunker Hill made over the claims.

"Denver," he said clasping him warmly by the hand, "I swear, you're the best danged friend I've got. For the last time, now, will you come to dinner?"

"Sure," grinned Denver, "but cut out that 'friend' talk. It makes me kind of nervous."

"I'll do it!" promised Bunker, "I'll do anything you ask me. You saved my bacon on them claims. That snooping Dutch professor tipped them jumpers off that I'd promised my wife not to shoot, but I guess when they see you come rambling up the gulch they begin to feel like Davey Crockett's coon."

"Don't shoot, Davey," he says, "I know you'll get me." And he came right down off the limb." Old Bunker laughed uproariously and slapped Denver on the back, after which he took him over to the house and announced a guest for dinner.

"Sit down, boy, sit down," he insisted hospitably as Denver spoke of going home to dress, "you're coming just the way you are. As Lord Chesterfield says: 'A clean shirt is half of full dress.' And a pair of overalls, I reckon, is the rest of it. Say, did you hear what Murray said when we took Dave over there, looking like something that the cat had brought in?"

"My Gawd," he says, "what happened to the mine?"

"That was something like a deacon that I worked for one time when he was fixing to paint his barn. He slung a ladder on an old, rotten rope and sent me up on it to work, and about half an hour afterward the rope gave way and dropped me, ladder and all, to the ground. The deacon was at the house when he heard the crash and he came running with his coat tails straight out."

"Goodness gracious!" he hollered, "did you spill the paint?"

"No," I says, "but I will!" And I kicked all his paint cans over.

"Well, old Murray is like that deacon; you touch his pocket and you touch his heart—he's always thinking about money. He'd been planning for months to slip in and jump these claims and here you come along and do the assessment work and knock him out of five of 'em. The boys say he's sure got blood in his eye and is cussing you out a blue streak. That's a nice gun you got off of Dave—how many notches has it got on the butt? Only three, eh? Well, say, if he ever sends over to ask for it, I've got another one that I'll loan you. You want to go heeled, understand? Murray's busy right now bossing those three shifts of miners that are driving that adit tunnel,

but when he gets the time he'll leave his glass eye on a fence post and come over to see what we're doing. Didn't you ever hear about Murray's glass eye?"

"Well, they say he lost his good one looking for a dollar that he dropped; but here's the high joke about the fence post. He got his start down in the valley, raising alfalfa and feeding stock, and he always hired Indians whenever he could because they spent all their time checks at the store. A Mexican or a white man might hold out a few but Indians are barred from getting drunk and they've only got one use for money. Yes, they believe it was made to spend, not to bury alongside of some fence post. And speaking of fence posts brings me back to the point—old Murray had a bunch of big, lazy Apaches working by the day cleaning out a ditch. He was down there at daylight and watched 'em like a hawk, but every time he'd go into town the whole bunch would sit down for a talk. Well, he had to go to town so one day he called 'em up and made 'em a little talk."

"Boys," he says, "I've got to go to town, but I'm going to watch you, all the same. Sure thing, now," he says, "you can laugh all you want to, but I'll see everything that you do." Then he took out his glass eye and set it on a fence post where it looked right down the ditch, and started off for town. You know these Apaches—superstitious as the devil—they got in and worked like niggers. Kinder scared 'em, you see, ain't used to glass eyes; but there was one old boy that was foxy. He dropped down in the ditch where the eye wouldn't see him and crept up behind that fence post like a snake, and then he picked up an empty tin can and slapped it down over the eye. There was a boy over at the ranch that saw the whole business, and he says them Indians never did a lick of work till they saw Bible Back's dust down the road. Pretty slick, eh, for an Indian? And some people will try to tell you that the untutored savage can't think."

"Well, that's the kind of an hombre that we're up against—he'd skin a flea for his hide and taller. As old Spud Murphy used to say, he'd rob a poor tumblebug of his ball of manure and put him on the wrong road home. He's mean, and it sure hurt his feelings to have you hop in and win back your mine. And knocking Dave on the head took the pip out of these other jumpers—I'm looking for the whole bunch to fade."

"Well, they might as well," said Denver, "because their claims are not worth fighting for, and there's a Miners' Committee going to call on 'em. I'm going along myself in an advisory capacity, and my advice will be to beat it. And if you'll take a tip from me, you'll hire a couple of miners and put them to work on your claims."

"I'll do it to-morrow," agreed Bunker enthusiastically. "I've got a couple of nibbles from some real mining men—not some of these little, one-candle-power promoters, but the kind that pay with certified checks—and if I can open up those claims and just get a color of copper, I'm fixed, boy, that's all there is to it. Come on now, let's go in to dinner."

The memory of that dinner, and of the music that followed it, remained long in Denver's mind; and later in the evening, when the lights were low and her parents had gone to their rest, Drusilla sang the familiar Barcarole. She sang it very softly, so as not to disturb them, but the look in her eyes recalled something to Denver, and as he was leaving he asked her a question. It was not if she loved him, for that would be unfair and might spoil an otherwise perfect evening; but he had been wondering as he listened whether she had not seen him that first time—when he had slipped down and listened from the shadows.

And when he asked her she smiled up at him tremulously and nodded her head very slowly; and then she whispered that she had always loved him for it, just for listening and going away. She had been down-cast that night, but his presence had been a comfort—it had persuaded her at last that she could sing. She had sung the Barcarole again, on that other night, when he had stepped out so boldly from the shadows; but it was the first time that she loved him for it, when he was still a total stranger and had come just to hear her sing. There was more that she said to him, and when he had to go she smiled again and gave him her hand, but he did not suggest a kiss. She was keeping that for him, until she had been to New York and run the gantlet of the tenors.

This was the high spot in Denver's life, when he had stood upon Parnassus and beheld everything that was good and beautiful; but in the morning he put on his old digging clothes again and went to work in the mine. He had seen her and it was

enough; now to break out the ore and win her for his own. For he was poor, and she was poor, and how could she succeed without money? But if he could open up his mine and block out a great ore body, then her claims and Bunker's, that touched it on both sides, would take on a speculative value. They could be sold for cash and she could go East in style, to take lessons from the ten-dollar teacher who had influence with directors and impresarios.

Denver put in a round of holes and blasted his way into the mountain; but as he came out in the evening, dirty and grimed and pale from powder sickness, Drusilla paled too and almost shrank away. She had strolled up before, only to hear the clank of his steel and the muffled thud of his blows; and now as she stood waiting, attired as daintily as a bride, the dream hero of her memories was banished. He was a miner again, a sweaty, toiling animal, dead to all the finer things of life; but if Denver read her thoughts he did not notice, for he remembered what Mother Trigedgo had told him.

Two weeks passed by and Labor Day came near, when all the hardy miners for-gathered in Globe and Moroni and engaged in the sports of their kind. A circular came to Denver, announcing the drilling contests and giving his name as one of the contestants; then a personal letter from the committee on arrangements, requesting him to send in his entry; and at last there came a messenger, a good hard-rock man named Owen, to suggest that they go in together. But Denver was driving himself to the limit, blasting out ore that grew richer each day; and at thought of Bible-back Murray, waiting to pounce upon his mine, he sent back a reluctant refusal. Yet they published his name, with the partner's place left vacant, and advertised that he would participate; for on the Fourth of July, with Slogger Meacham for a partner, he had won the title of champion.

The decision to go was forced upon him suddenly on the day before the event, though he had almost lost track of time. Every morning at daybreak he had been up and cooking, after breakfast he had gone to the mine; and, between mucking out the tunnel and putting in new shots, the weeks had passed like days. But when he went to Bunker on the first of September and asked for a little more powder Bunker took him

to the powder house and showed him a space where the boxes of dynamite had been. Then he took him behind the counter and showed him the money till and Denver awoke from his dream.

In spite of the stampede and the activity all about them, the whole Pinal district was not producing a cent, and would not for months to come. Every dollar that was spent there had to come in from the outside, and the men who held the claims were all poor. Even after driving off the jumpers and regaining their lost claims, the majority had gone home after merely scratching up their old dumps in a vain pretense at doing the assessment work.

The promoters were not buying, they were simply taking options and waiting on Murray's tunnel; and until he drove in and actually tapped the copper ore there would be no steady boom. He had organized a company and was selling a world of stock, even using it to pay off his men; and it was whispered about that his strike was a fake, for he still refused to exhibit the drill cores. But whether his strike was a bona-fide discovery or merely a ruse to sell stock, the fact could not be blinked that Denver and Bunker Hill had reached the end of their rope. They were broke again, and Denver set out for Globe leaving Bunker to hold down his claim.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



A MAN WITH A MARVELOUS MEMORY

THEODORE E. BURTON, former United States senator from Ohio, is famous for his memory. He recalls with lightninglike swiftness events and faces that came into his life even a generation ago.

Granville W. Mooney, of Cleveland, tells this story illustrating the Burton memory power:

"I was one time riding on a train with Senator Burton, and, as we were passing through from the dining car to the senator's compartment, a gentleman stopped me and inquired if the person with me was not Senator Burton. I told him it was, and he then asked if he could introduce a young man to him. I invited him to come to our compartment a little later, which he did.

"As soon as he stepped into the room, Senator Burton instantly recognized him and addressed him as Mr. Hopkins, and asked how he was getting along in the lumber business. The gentleman said, 'I would like to know how you know I am in the lumber business, as I have never met you but once, and that was many years ago, and I certainly did not mention my occupation.'

"The senator replied that that was correct, but that when he handed in his card on that occasion years ago he noticed on the corner of it the name of his lumber company."



DISEASES ARE ON THE INCREASE

EVER since the drafted men have been going before the medical examiners to have their physical fitness for army service passed on, it has been growing more and more evident that human flesh is heir to innumerable ills. The would-be slackers have cooked up grand, gloomy and mysterious maladies, ailments affecting them from their toe joints up to their cerebral cells.

Some of these sufferings have been as obscure, pale and fanciful as that attributed by a farmer to his father. A traveling man was standing in a country store which he had frequently visited. Silas Jones, whose father was ninety-five years old, came in.

"How's your father, Mr. Jones?" inquired the salesman.

"Not so well; not so well. In fact, he's ailing considerable."

"Well, I'm surprised to hear that. A few months ago you were bragging that he was ninety-five years old and in perfect health. What seems to be the matter with him?"

"I don't know exactly," replied Silas Jones. "Sometimes I think farming don't exactly agree with him."

After the Pandemonium

By Berton Braley

AH yes, we live in stirring times,
In busy, dizzy, whirring times,
And life is filled and thrilled with stress of marvelous events;
With good deeds and nefarious
And schemes and plotting various
And guns that make the earth to quake on many continents.

We face, with hearts unscareable,
Things horrible and terrible,
We bear with woes unbearable, and day by day we see,
Amid the war's insanity,
Upheavals of humanity
And cosmic throes surpassing those of all past history.

Yes, these are most tremendous days,
Gigantic and stupendous days,
I'm glad I've lived among them and have sung them, now and then;
But when the war is won at last
And this grim job is done at last,
'Twill seem sublime to have the time to laze around again.

Existence may seem tenuous
When it has been so strenuous,
But after all this cry and call when loafing is a sin,
Ah, after all these crazy days,
We'll wallow in the lazy days,
The breezy, easy, hazy days we've fought so hard to win.

At first, no doubt, they'll seem to us,
An airy, fairy dream to us,
We'll fear we must be rousing from our drowsing mighty soon,
But when we know they're true again,
How sweet 'twill be to view again
The Maytime as a playtime and to taste the bliss of June!

The Superspy

By Edgar Wallace

Author of "The Man Who Knew Everything," Etc.

A Teuton superman takes us into his confidence here and shows us what fools the English are in comparison with the elect of earth—his people. Scientifically, he proves to us that there is no such word as "fail" in his Lexicon of Might, forgetting that the world is preparing for him a still more scientific Lexicon of Might-Have-Been.

SECRET-SERVICE work is a joke in peace time and it is paid at joke rates. People talk of the fabulous sums of money which our government spends on this kind of work, and I have no doubt a very large sum was spent every year, but it had to go a long way. Even Herr Kressler, of the Bremen-American line, who gave me my monthly check used to nod and wink when he handed over my two hundred marks.

"Ah, my good Heine," he would say stroking his stubby beard, "they make a fool of me, the government, but I suppose I mustn't ask who is your other paymaster?"

"Herr Kressler," said I earnestly, "I assure you that this is the whole sum I receive from the government."

"So?" he would say and shake his head. "Ah, you are close fellows, and I mustn't ask questions."

There was little to do save now and again to keep track of some of the bad men, the extreme socialists and the fellows who ran away from Germany to avoid military service. I often wished there was more because it would have been possible to have made a little on one's expenses. Fortunately, two or three of the very big men in New York and Chicago knew the work I was doing, and credited me with a much larger income than I possessed.

The reputation of being well off is a very useful one, and in my case, it brought me all sorts of commissions and little tips which I could profitably exploit on Wall Street, and in one way or another I lived comfortably, had a nice apartment on Riverside

Drive, played the races and enjoyed an occasional trip to Washington at the government's expense.

I first knew that war was likely to break out in July. I think we Germans understood the European situation much better than the English, and certainly much better than the Americans, and we knew that the event at Serajevo—by the way, poor Klein of our service and an old colleague of mine was killed by the bomb which ended the life of the archduke, though nobody seems to have noticed the fact—would produce the war which Austria had been expecting or seeking an excuse to wage for two years.

If I remember aright the assassination was committed on the Sunday morning. The New York papers published the story on that day, and on the Monday afternoon I was summoned to Washington, and saw the secretary who was in charge of our department on the Tuesday evening after dinner.

All the big people, even his excellency, called me by my Christian name, for I was at college with many of the officials who are prominent in the world to-day and I served as volunteer in the engineers of the guard and afterward served a probation on the great general staff, survey department.

The secretary was very grave and told me that war was almost certain and that Austria was determined to settle with Serbia for good, but that it was feared that Russia would come in, and that the war could not be localized because if Russia made war Germany and France would also be involved.

Personally, I have never liked the French,

and my French is not particularly good. I was hoping that he was going to tell us that England was concerned, and I asked him if this was not the case. To my disappointment he told me that England would certainly not fight, that she would remain neutral, and that strict orders had been issued that nothing was to be done which would in any way annoy the English.

"Their army," he said, "is beneath contempt, but their navy is the most powerful in the world and its employment might have very serious consequences."

It seemed very early to talk about war, with the newspapers still full of long descriptions of the Serajevo murder and the removal of the archduke's body, and I remembered afterward with what astounding assurance our secretary had spoken.

I must confess I was disappointed because I had spent a very long time in England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales establishing touch with good friends, who, I felt, would work with advantage for me in the event of war. I had prepared my way by founding the Chinese News Bureau, a little concern that had an office in Fleet Street, and was ostensibly engaged in collecting items of news concerning China and in distributing them to the London and provincial press and in forwarding a London letter to certain journals in Peking, Tientsin and Shanghai.

Of course, the money was found by "the department," and it was not a financial success, but it was a good start in case one ever had to operate in London, since I was registered as a naturalized Chilean and it was extremely unlikely that Chile would be at war with any European power.

I could not see what there was to do in New York, where the ground was so effectively covered. We had a police force of our own associated with the Bremen-American line. We had reservist organizations in every big town, and the military and naval and commercial investigation—I will not use the hateful word "espionage"—was in good hands and I looked like being at a loose end and subordinate to people who were my inferiors, if I remained in America.

On August 3, 1914, I received a message from Washington in the departmental code, telling me that war with England was inevitable, and that I was to sail on the first boat and take up my duties in London in full control of the British department.

I was overjoyed with the news and I

know that men like Stohwasser, Wesser and other men of my department looked at me with envy. They did not think they had an easy task because the American secret service is a very competent one, but they thought I was a lucky pig—as indeed I was—to be operating in a country containing a population of forty millions, most of whom, as one of their writers said, were fools.

The English are, of course, a very thick-headed people, as I have reason to know. They are childish and unsuspecting, and you have only to ask for valuable information to get it. The Scotch or Scots are shrewder in business, but very simple people, practically ignorant as are the English of European politics, and very naive in all matters affecting the state.

Moreover, as I had discovered on several of my visits, the Scots are not particularly well disposed to their southern neighbors, and I have heard many insulting references made by them against the others. It is quite a common thing to hear the expressions of scorn, "A close-fisted Scot" or "A pudding-headed Englishman," while in Wales neither the Scots nor the English are popular.

Ireland, of course, was in a constant condition of rebellion, and I looked forward with great pleasure to witnessing and inflaming the little domestic quarrels which I knew would arise as soon as war broke out.

I landed at Liverpool on August 11th. My passports were in order and I immediately went forward to London. There was no trace of any excitement. I saw a lot of soldiers on their way to their depots, and arriving in London I immediately received the reports of our innumerable agents.

With what pride did I contemplate the splendid smoothness of our system!

When the emperor pressed the button marked "mobilize" he brought, in addition to his soldiers, a thousand gallant hearts and brilliant minds in a score of countries all eager and happy to work for the aggrandizement of our beloved fatherland.

Six of us met at a fashionable restaurant near Trafalgar Square. There was Emil Stein, who called himself Robinson, Karl Besser—I need not give all their aliases—Heine von Betzl, Fritz von Kahn and Alexander Koos.

Stein had arrived from Holland the night before and Fritz von Kahn had come down from Glasgow where he had been acting as a

hotel porter. These men were, as I say, known to me and to one another, but there were thousands of unknowns who had their secret instructions which were only to be opened in case of war, with whom we had to get in touch.

I briefly explained the procedure and the method by which our agents would be identified. Every German agent would prove his bona fides by producing three used postage stamps of Nicaragua. It is a simple method of identification, for there is nothing treasonable or suspicious in a man carrying about in his pocketbook a ten, twenty or a fifty-centime stamp of a neutral country.

I sent Emil Stein away to Portsmouth and instructed him to make contact with sailors of the fleet, especially with officers. Besser was dispatched to a west-coast shipping center to report on all the boats which left and entered. I sent Kahn and his family on a motor-car tour to the east coast with instructions to find out what new coast defenses were being instituted.

"You must exercise the greatest care," I said, "even though these English are very stupid, they may easily blunder into a discovery. Make the briefest notes of all you see and hear and only use the number three code in cases of urgent necessity."

We finished our dinner and we drank to "The Day" and sang under our breath "Deutschland über alles" and separated, Koos coming with me.

Koos was a staff officer of the imperial service, and though he was not noble he was held in the greatest respect. He was a fine, handsome fellow, very popular with the girls and typically British in appearance. His English was as good as mine, and that is saying a great deal.

I sent him to Woolwich because in his character as an American inventor—he had spent four years in the States—he was admirably fitted to pick up such facts as were of the greatest interest to the government.

I did not see Koos for a few days, and in the meantime I was very busy arranging with my couriers who were to carry the result of our discoveries through a neutral country to Germany. The system I adopted was a very simple one. My notes, written in India ink were separately photographed by means of a Kodak camera. When I had finished the twelve exposures I opened the camera in a dark room, carefully rerolled

the spool and sealed it so that it had the appearance of being an unexposed pellicle. I argued that while the English military authorities would confiscate photographs which had obviously been taken, they might pass films which were apparently unused.

I had arranged to meet Koos on the night of August 17th, and made my way to the rendezvous, engaging a table for two. I had hardly seated myself when to my surprise Koos came in accompanied by a very pretty English girl. He walked past me, merely giving me the slightest side glance, and seated himself at the next table. I was amused. I knew the weakness of our good Koos for the ladies, but I knew also that he was an excellent investigator and that he was probably combining business with pleasure. In this I was right. The meal finished—and the innocent laughter of the girl made me smile again—and Koos walked out with the girl on his arm.

As he passed my table he dropped a slip of paper which I covered with my napkin. When I was sure I was not observed I read the note:

Making excellent progress. Meet me at a quarter to eleven outside Piccadilly tube.

I met him at the appointed time and we strolled into Jermyn Street.

"What do you think of her?" was Koos' first question.

"Very pretty, my friend," said I, "you have excellent taste."

He chuckled.

"I have also excellent luck, my dear Heine"—even well-born people call me by my Christian name, as I have before remarked, though I do not boast of this because my father's mother was a Von Kuhl-Hozeldorf and I am in a sense related to the best Wurtemberg nobility. "That lady," went on Koos, "is the daughter of the chief gun constructor at Woolwich."

He looked at me to note the effect of his words, and I must confess I was startled.

"Splendid, my dear fellow!" said I warmly. "How did you come to meet her?"

"A little act of gallantry," he said airily; "a lady walking on Blackheath twists her ankle, what more natural than that I should offer her assistance to the nearest seat? Quite a babbling little person—typically English," he added dryly.

I laughed again.

"I could have done very well without her

assistance, of course," he went on; "as a matter of fact I had met one or two very excellent Englishmen who, with their usual penchant for boastfulness, were able to supply me with particulars of a new gun lathe of which they are very proud. In fact, I have got the rough drawings, but the little lady——"

He raised his eyes to the heavens and chuckled joyfully.

"My dear friend," he said impressively, "she is a mine of information. An only daughter, and a little spoiled, I am afraid; she knows secrets of construction of which even the technical experts of the government are ignorant. Can you imagine a German talking over military secrets with his daughter?"

"The English are a little mad, as I have remarked before," said I.

I then closely questioned Koos as to the activity of the police. It was naturally to be expected that Woolwich would be well guarded and that strangers would arouse suspicion.

"There is no English secret police," said my friend cheerfully, "there is a special department at Scotland Yard whose footsteps you can hear a mile away, but a secret service as it is understood in Germany or even in America does not exist except in the fervid imagination of romantic novelists."

"I only asked you," I said hastily, "for fear that this girl should be watched."

"You can dismiss that possibility from your mind," smiled Koos.

By this time we had reached the end of Jermyn Street and had turned down St. James Street toward the palace, and our conversation was naturally interrupted, for we had to speak in English and there was rather a crowd of people. It was not until we had reached the mall, comparatively deserted, that Koos continued his story.

"You need not worry. The girl is romantic—an idealist."

"And you are the ideal, you dog!" said I.

He twisted his mustache, by no means ill-pleased at the accusation.

"Some men have that power of attraction," he said modestly. "I am rather sorry for the little thing."

"What have you learned from her?" I asked.

Koos did not reply for a moment, then he said:

"So far, very little. I am naturally anx-

ious not to alarm her or arouse her suspicions. She is willing to talk and she has access to her father's study, and from what I gather, she practically keeps all the keys of the house. At present I am educating her to the necessity for preserving secrecy about our friendship, and to do her justice she is just as anxious that our clandestine meetings should not come to the ears of her father as I am."

We walked along in silence.

"This may be a very big thing," I said.

"Bigger than you imagine," replied Alexander, "there is certain to be an exchange of confidential views about artillery between the Allies, and though we have nothing to learn from the English, it is possible that the French may send orders to Woolwich for armament. In that case, our little friend may be a mine of information. I am working with my eyes a few months ahead," he said, "and for that reason I am allowing our friendship to develop slowly."

I did not see Koos again for a week except that I caught a glimpse of him in the Café Riche with his fair companion. He did not see me, however, and as it was desirable that I should not intrude I made no attempt to make my presence apparent.

At the end of the week we met by appointment which we arranged through the agony column of a certain London newspaper.

I was feeling very cheerful, for Stein, Besser and Kahn had sent in most excellent reports, and it only needed Alexander's encouraging news to complete my sum of happiness.

"You remember the gun lathe I spoke to you about?" he said. "My friend—you may regard the blue prints as in your hands."

"How has this come about?"

"I just mentioned the fact to my little girl that I was interested in inventions and that I had just put a new lathe upon the market in America and she was quite excited about it. She asked me if I had heard about the lathe at Woolwich, and I said that I had heard rumors that there was such a lathe. She was quite overjoyed at the opportunity of giving me information, and asked me whether in the event of her showing me the prints I would keep the fact a great secret, because," he laughed softly, "she did not think her father would like the print to leave his office!"

"You must be careful of this girl," I said, "she may be detected."

"There is no danger, my dear fellow," said Alexander, "she is the shrewdest little woman in the world. I am getting quite to like her, if one can like these abominable people. She is such a child!"

I told him to keep in communication with me and sent him off feeling what the English call in "good form." I dispatched a courier by the morning train to the Continent, giving details of the British expeditionary force. Only two brigades were in France—and that after three weeks of preparation! In Germany, every man was mobilized and at his corps or army headquarters weeks ago—every regiment had moved up to its order-of-battle position. Two brigades! It would be amusing if it were not pathetic!

Besser came to me soon after lunch in a very excited state.

"The whole of the English expeditionary force of three divisions is in France," he said, "and what is more, is in line."

I smiled at him.

"My poor dear fellow, who has been pulling your foot?" I asked.

"It is confidentially communicated to the press and will be public to-morrow," he said.

"Lies," said I calmly, "you are too credulous. The English are the most stupid liars in the world."

I was not so calm that night when I ran down in my car to Gorsefont where our very good friend, the Baron von Hertz-Missenger, had a nice little estate.

"Heine," he said after he had taken me to his study and shut the door, "I have received a radio through my wireless from the *Kriegsministerium** to the effect that the whole of the British expeditionary force has landed and is in line."

"Impossible, Herr Baron," I said, but he shook his head.

"It is a fact—our intelligence in Belgium is infallible. Now, I do not want to interfere with you, for I am but a humble volunteer in this great work, but I advise you to give a little more attention to the army. We may have underrated the military assistance which Britain can offer."

"The English army, Herr Baron," said I firmly, "is almost as insignificant a factor as—well the American army, which only

exists on paper! Nevertheless, I will take your advice."

It was necessary to humor the good baron who, although a naturalized British "subject"—which of course means absolutely nothing—is nobly born, and is indeed a member of the Hesse-Hohenlohe princely descended family.

We talked a little while about the British. I told the Herr Baron what I had said about the British secret service and he quite agreed.

"I have been in this country for twelve years and I have met everybody of importance," he said, "and I can assure you there is no secret intelligence department such as we Germans have brought to such perfect efficiency. As you know, I am a racing man and I meet with all sorts of people, good and bad, and I can indorse all that you say."

I went back to town and dispatched another courier, for as yet the Torpington Varnish Factory—about which I may tell you later—had not been equipped with radio.

That night I again saw Alexander. It was at supper at the Fritz, and he looked a fine figure of a man. I felt proud of the country which could produce such a type. Where, I ask you, among the paunchy English and the scraggy Scotch, with their hairy knees and their sheep-shank legs, could you find a counterpart of that *beau sabreur*? Coward, treacherous Albion! Shiver in your kilt, hateful Scotland! It is not generally known that the royal and high-born Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria is rightful king of Scotland. Tremble, wild Wales and unreliable Ireland when you come in arms against a land which can produce such men as Alexander Koo!

I never saw a girl look more radiantly happy than did the young woman who was sitting vis-à-vis my friend. There was a light in her eye and a color in her cheeks which were eloquent of her joy.

I saw Alexander afterward. He came secretly to my rooms.

"Have you brought the blue print?" I asked.

He shook his head smilingly.

"To-morrow, my friend, not only the blue print of the lathe, not only the new gun-mounting model, but the lady herself will come to me. I want your permission to leave the day after to-morrow for home.

*The Prussian ministry of war.

I cannot afford to wait for what the future may bring."

"Can you smuggle the plans past the English police?" I asked, a little relieved that he had volunteered to act as courier on so dangerous a mission.

"Nothing easier."

"And the girl—have you her passport?"

He nodded.

"How far shall you take her?"

"To Rotterdam," he said promptly.

In a way, I was sorry. Yes, I am sentimental, I fear, and "sentiment does not live in an agent's pocket," as the saying goes. I wish it could have been done without—I shrugged my shoulders and steeled my soul with the thought that she was English and that it was all for the fatherland.

"You must come to the Café Riche tonight and witness our going," said Alexander; "you will observe that she will carry a leather case such as schoolgirls use for their books and exercises. In that case, my friend, will be enough material to keep our friends in Berlin busy for a month."

I took leave of him, giving him certain instructions as to the course he was to take after reporting at headquarters, and spent the rest of the night coding a message for our Alexander to carry with him.

I snatched a few hours' sleep between telephone calls, and rising at noon I read the morning papers—full of lies as are all British papers, though the Americans are worse—and went through the picture post cards which my kind friends, Von Kahn and Von Wetzl had sent to me. If you had seen those post cards with their long "holiday messages" I wonder if you would have taken a magnifying glass to search for minute pin pricks under certain letters and words? I did, because I was a chief of a bureau unequaled in the world for ingenuity and presence.

The hour at which Alexander was to meet the girl was eight o'clock in the evening. His table, already booked, was number forty-seven, which is near the window facing Piccadilly. I telephoned through to the café and booked number forty-six, for I was anxious to witness the comedy.

All was now moving like clockwork—and let me say that the smoothness of the arrangements was due largely to the very thorough and painstaking organization work which I had carried out in the piping days of peace. We Germans have a passion for

detail and for thoroughness and for this reason—apart from the inherent qualities of simplicity and honesty, and apart from the superiority of our kultur and our lofty idealism—we have been unconquerable throughout the ages.

For example, we had foreseen the necessity in organizing our intelligence department, to employ not Germans, but subjects of neutral states wherever possible. People who talk of "German spies" or "the untimely German peril" cannot realize that from the moment war broke out, all Germans known as such, were under the observation of the police and not only the police but their own neighbors. It would be impossible, as I had foreseen, for such men to offer assistance to our great and splendid cause, because the least suspicious movement on their parts would result in their arrest. I have a considerable respect for the Scotland Yard routine—investigation. No, my sirs, you do us no justice when you talk of "German spies." Search not for the "Hun" as in the bitterness of your impotent rage you call us, but for the—

I think I have said that much of my time was taken up by answering telephone calls.

You must remember that I was in London as the representative of a Chinese News Bureau. I was also an agent for a firm of importers in Shanghai. It was, therefore, only natural that I should be called up all hours of the day and night with offers of goods.

"I can let you have a hundred and twenty bales of Manchester goods at one hundred and twenty-five."

Now one hundred and twenty and one hundred and twenty-five added together make two hundred and forty-five, and turning to my "simple code" to paragraph two hundred and forty-five I find the following:

Second Battalion of the Graniteshire Regiment entrained to-day for embarkation.

The minor agents carried this code—containing fourteen hundred simple sentences to cover all naval or military movements—in a small volume. The code is printed on one side of very thin paper leaves, and the leaves are as porous and absorbent as blotting paper.

One blot of ink dropped upon a sheet will obliterate a dozen—a fact which our tireless agents have discovered.

Clipped in the center of the book, as a

pencil is clipped in an ordinary pocketbook, is a tiny tube of the thinnest glass containing a quantity of black dye stuff. The agent fearing detection has only to press the cover of the book sharply and the contents of the book is reduced to black sodden pulp.

Need I say that this ingenious invention was German in its origin?*

My days were, therefore, very full. There came reports from all quarters and some the most unlikely. How, you may ask, did our agents make these discoveries?

There are many ways by which information is conveyed. The relations of soldiers are always willing to talk about their men and will tell you, if they know, when they are leaving, the ships they are leaving by, and will sometimes give you other important facts, but particularly about ports and dates of embarkation their information is useful.

Also officers will occasionally talk at lunch and dinner and will tell their womenfolk military secrets which a waiter can mentally note and convey to the proper quarters. Our best agents, however, were barbers, tailors, chiropodists and dentists. English people will always discuss matters with a barber or with the man who is fitting them with their clothes, and as almost every tailor was making military uniforms and a very large number of the tailors in London were either German or Austrian, I had quite a wealth of news.

Tailors are useful because they work to time. Clothes have to be delivered by a certain date, and generally the man who has the suit made will tell the fitter the date he expects to leave England.

Other useful investigators are Turkish-bath attendants and dentists. A man in a dentist's chair is always nervous and will try to make friends with the surgeon who is operating on him. Of all agents, the waiter is in reality the least useful because writers have been pointing out for so many years the fact that most waiters were German, although the truth is that most restaurant waiters are Italian, and it is among the bedroom waiters that you find a preponderance of my fellow countrymen.

Another department of my work which kept me busy was the money-lending department. I had initiated a system of inquiry into the financial affairs of officers and

I was able to keep track of all officers who were in financial difficulties. This department had been a very great disappointment to us, for in spite of the fact that we had the power to ruin hundreds of careers we have never been able to employ that power profitably.

The British officer is absolutely unscrupulous and has no sense of honor. Often our agents have offered to release them from their liabilities in return for some trifling service, and these people have preferred to live under the odium of owing people money to securing an honorable release from their debts by some simple little obliging act such as giving us particulars of their brother officers' losses at cards, and the like.

And that is what is called English honor!

Is it not more dishonorable to owe money you cannot pay than to whisper a few little secrets about men who probably are as dishonorable as themselves? However, to return to Alexander and his inamorata.

Promptly at eight o'clock, I took my place at the table and ordered an excellent dinner—my waiter was of course a good German—and a bottle of Rhenish wine. A few minutes after I had given my order Alexander and the girl arrived. She was dressed in a long traveling coat of tussore silk and carried—as I was careful to note—a shiny brown leather portfolio. This she placed carefully on her lap when she sat down and raised her veil.

She looked a little pale, but smiled readily enough at Alexander's jests.

I watched her as she slowly peeled off her gloves and unbuttoned her coat. Her eyes were fixed on vacancy. Doubtless her conscience was pricking her.

Is it the thought of thy home, little maid, from whence thou hast fled never to return? Is it the anguished picture of thy heart-broken and ruined father bemoaning his daughter and his honor? Have no fear, little one, thy treason shall enrich the chosen of the German God, the World Encirclers, foreordained and destined to Imperial Grandeur!

So I thought, watching her and listening. "Are you sure that everything will be all right?" she asked anxiously.

"Please trust me," smiled Alexander.

Oh, the deceiving rogue—how I admired his sang-froid!

"You are ready to go—you have packed?" she asked.

*As a matter of fact, it was invented by the American secret service.—ED.

"As ready as you, my dear Elsie. Come—let me question you," he bantered, "have you all those wonderful plans which are going to make our fortunes after we are married?"

So he had promised that—what would the gracious Frau Koos-Mettleheim have said to this perfidy on the part of her husband?

"I have all the plans," she began, but he hushed her with a warning glance.

I watched the dinner proceed, but heard very little more. All the time she seemed to be plying him with anxious questions to which he returned reassuring answers.

They had reached the sweets when she began to fumble at her pocket. I guessed, rightly, that she was seeking a handkerchief and, wrongly, that she was crying.

Her search was fruitless and she beckoned the waiter.

"I left a little bag in the ladies' room—it has my handkerchief, will you ask the attendant to send the bag?"

The waiter departed and presently returned with two men in the livery of the hotel.

I was sitting side by side and could see the faces both of the girl and Alexander, and I noticed the amusement in his face that two attendants must come to carry one small bag.

Then I heard the girl speak.

"Put your hands, palms upward, on the table," she said.

I was still looking at Alexander's face.

First amazement, and then anger showed—then I saw his face go gray and into his eyes crept the fear of death.

The girl was holding an automatic pistol

and the barrel was pointing at Alexander's breast. She half turned her head to the attendants.

"Here is your man, sergeant," she said, briskly, "Alexander Koos, alias Ralph Burton-Smith. I charge him with espionage."

They snapped the steel handcuffs upon Alexander's wrists and led him out, the girl following.

I rose unsteadily and followed.

In the vestibule was quite a small crowd which had gathered at the first rumor of so remarkable a sensation. Here, for the first time, Alexander spoke, and it was curious how in his agitation his perfect English became broken and hoarse.

"Who are you? You have a mistake maken, my frient!"

"I am an officer of the British intelligence department," said the girl.

"Himmel! Secret service!" gasped Alexander, "I thought it was not!"

I saw them take him away and stole home.

They had trapped him. The girl with the sprained ankle had been waiting for him that day on Blackheath. She had led him on by talking of the plans she could get until he had told her of the rough plans he already had. While, as he thought, he was tightening the net about her, she was drawing the meshes tighter about him. Phew! It makes me hot to think of it!

Was there a secret service in England after all?

For myself, my tracks were too well covered—for Alexander I could do nothing. He would not betray me. I was sure of that. Yet, to be perfectly certain, I left the next night for Dundee, and I was in Dundee when the news came that Alexander had been shot in the Tower of London.



TAKING NO CHANCES ON NOISE

ONE evening there had been a disturbance raised in a church in a little Oklahoma town where some I. W. W.'s had tried to break up a Liberty Loan meeting.

This greatly pained the old sexton. He felt that he had been remiss in his duties in allowing such people to get inside the house of worship, and he made up his mind that henceforth he would be on his guard against a repetition of any such scenes.

The following Sunday morning a very old lady who was deaf entered the church and took a seat. She carried an old-fashioned ear trumpet. When the services opened, she began to adjust the trumpet. The sexton, however, was right on the job. Rushing down the aisle with long, catlike steps, he hissed to the worshiper:

"Madam, one toot and you're out!"

"Every Knock's a Boost"—Is It?

By James Hay, Jr.

Author of "When the Boys Come Back," Etc.

The opinion of Joseph M. Flannery, the radium manufacturer, one of the things cited to show that no one can really afford to have adverse criticism generally circulated about him

ONE of the greatest fallacies on the lips of American business men to-day is the foolish phrase, 'Every knock's a boost!' It comes either from the fellow who feels that, because of his inefficiency, he deserves rough criticism, or from the man who has made enemies unnecessarily. In either case, it's untrue. I never yet have heard of the man or the business that couldn't be helped by commendation or hurt by censure."

Joseph M. Flannery said that. He also said: "I should hate to think I couldn't deal with any man without making him mad." And he added to that: "The only working capital you can increase every day with the absolute knowledge that nobody but yourself can diminish it is your name, what your name stands for, your reputation."

When I remarked to a Pittsburgh banker that I understood his fellow townsman, Flannery, was a self-made man, he replied: "There's a still better description of him. Call him 'self-perfected.' That just about sums him up."

Joseph M. Flannery is an illustration of the great Romance of American business. He has spent his life taking chances, defying circumstances, and achieving the impossible. To-day he manufactures two or three times more radium than all the other makers of the precious stuff the world over. He receives in the neighborhood of a hundred thousand dollars for an amount of his product that equals the size of the ordinary cigarette. Frequently, in order to assemble that much of it, his factory breaks up and refines six hundred tons of ore.

When his friends told him he was dreaming dreams in thinking he could get radium in commercial quantities out of the carnotite deposits of the Western States, he said po-

lately, "Is that so?" and, having listened to them attentively, put all his money and energy into his plans. It was a big task, and lasted several years, but he turned the trick and never said "I told you so!" to anybody.

After he had produced the radium, he found that there was little or no market for it in this country. People knew nothing about radium. They regarded it as an untested, unreliable element about which a few long-haired scientists had advanced marvelous and absurd theories. But Flannery refused to be discouraged. He built a laboratory, employed physicians and physicists to demonstrate the uses to which radium could be put, printed a magazine describing the discoveries and sent out salesmen to gather orders.

As a thinker, manufacturer, advertiser and salesman, therefore, this man who began life with nothing but a good head and a strong heart knows what boosts business and, incidentally, what does *not* boost it. When he points out that the only possible result of being "knocked" is a loss of money and prestige, he speaks from the cards—*not* from theory. He advances concrete facts to prove his statements.

Fires may burn you out; floods may destroy your property; prices may take an unforeseen and disastrous drop; something may upset the ordinary operations of the law of supply and demand; but these things are merely incidents to the man who has ability and courage. The one catastrophe you need fear is the loss of reputation, the discovery that your name does not stand to-day for as much as it did yesterday.

Prestige is, in fact, the only magic wand in the prosaic realm of modern business. It has formed more corporations, swung more big deals, erected taller skyscrapers,

overcome more obstacles, bestowed greater success, and accumulated more power and money than any other one factor in human affairs. It is more potent by far than what you have in the bank now or ever will have; it is the single and solitary possession with which men have again and again convinced other men that the seemingly impossible was possible.

Of this prestige—this thing that labels you, this reputation which is never boosted by a knock—there are two kinds: the prestige of reputation and the prestige of personality. If you have both, you already have done big things and will continue to do them. If you have neither, you will accomplish nothing until you have acquired at least one of them.

If Andrew Carnegie, appropriately press-agented and introduced, took his seat at a directors' table and announced that he was so sure of a project's ultimate success that he intended to invest half a million dollars in it, the other men in the room, however doubtful they had been, would agree with Mr. Carnegie ninety-nine times out of a hundred. If a man looking like Carnegie, but introduced as Sam Smith, pulled off a similar performance, the directors would break into a resounding chorus of "Show me!"

That is a fair example of the power of the prestige of reputation. It is a good example because Carnegie's personality is not such as to impress other men. His strength lies in the common knowledge of the many different ways in which he has succeeded in the past—his prestige.

If a quiet, unassuming, rather timid fellow goes to his boss with "a great idea" and explains it in a singsong voice, with drooping shoulders and with wavering glance, the boss says: "Umhun! I'll think it over." And that's the end of it.

If another man in the same company gets the same idea and approaches the president of the corporation with a burst of enthusiasm, a keen eye, a confident manner and a ringing voice, he generally gets results. The president says: "By George! there ought to be a lot in it. Come on. We'll try it out." That is an instance of the prestige of personality. It means that a man's character and temperament are such that he is stronger than others, that he has learned how to compel attention and make himself heard and respected.

If a man whom you knew to be Henry Ford stopped you on the street and said, "I saw you at work yesterday without your knowing it; I liked your methods, and that's why I'm going to show you how to make a lot of money," you would probably think Ford a little brash in his judgment of men, but you would thank him and do pretty much anything he advised.

If a dead ringer for Ford, whom you knew to be nobody in particular, dropped into your office and told you he wanted to make you rich, you would begin to wriggle and wonder how soon you could get rid of him. There you are. Ford has succeeded. His prestige is established on a lifetime of labor.

The prestige of his personality is of no weight. Nobody, on seeing him without knowing who he was, would waste two seconds on him.

But take Theodore Roosevelt, or Lord Northcliffe, or Chief Justice White, or Elihu Root, or Flannery himself—and you get a different story. Those men are masters. They have the vitality, the aura of courage, the voice of authority, the sense of power. They know they are entitled to leadership—and other men learn every day that this is true. They can sweep things before them. They are the possessors of the prestige of personality.

You know, perhaps, two or three men who, when they enter your club or any gathering of men, immediately assume leadership and prominence. They draw others to them and they stand out above the crowd, whether it be as tellers of good jokes or as critics of current events. Their prestige is unquestioned.

A professional baseball umpire told me once that Ty Cobb owed much of his successful base running to the belief of the opposing team that he would try to "pull" something desperate and get away with it. That is a brilliant example of what prestige is. The other team was confused and made ineffective because of its knowledge that he had done these things so often before. He was helped by his reputation as much as by his legs.

People in the mass like to be led and dazzled and told what to do and think. That is because they have not accumulated prestige either by what they have done or by what they are. They have not enriched their personalities by thought. They have not built up their bodies by proper care and

exercise. They have not piled one achievement upon another until at last their accomplishments have bulked large.

Therefore, they enjoy seeing other men whom they can admire while they say "That's what I'd do if I had the chance!"

Billy Sunday takes advantage of that mental attitude, and, because he has force, personality, becomes famous. Your favorite author puts into his writings the same kind of spirit. You find it all along the line.

But let the "knockers" get busy and stay busy—and what happens? No man can withstand forever the storm of even half-justified knocks. Nelson, the hero of Trafalgar, died unhappy because of the way the Englishmen had condemned his private life. Parnell, that wonderful Irishman, suffered the same fate. One of the greatest first baseman baseball ever knew had to be sold to another club because the right-field bleachers got "sore" at him and "roasted" him in every game. The only "run on a bank" that I ever witnessed personally was precipitated because an enemy of the bank's president knocked the institution in a conversation with three other men.

I once saw a President of the United States with tears in his eyes because of attacks on him printed in the newspapers. A man whom I had known for ten years and knew that he did not drink, confided to me once: "Twelve years ago I was a byword in this town as a drunkard. The reputation hasn't left me yet. I suppose it takes twenty years to live down such knocks as I got then." The list could be prolonged indefinitely.

"Of course," as Flannery remarked, "there are always a few creatures who find it difficult to forgive success. They are the chronic knockers."

But the knocks from them, even, do nobody any good. They hurt you unless you offset them by what you accomplish. There has yet to be found an unkind remark or an adverse criticism that confers a benefit

upon a man or a business. In his day, George Washington was hampered by the knockers. So were the railroads fifteen years ago when, because they ignored their critics, there was started the excess amount of legislation against them. And you, I dare say, are neither better than Washington nor richer than a transcontinental railway.

When you snap your fingers and say "Every knock's a boost!" you are laying up damnation for yourself. In reality, you don't want to take the trouble to remedy the personal failings or the loose places in your business which have caused the knocks. You feel that your prestige is diminishing, and you are trying to think it will be helped by the very thing that destroys it. Remember: you don't have to be surrounded by sand to behave like an ostrich.

If you are becoming unpopular, dissect yourself and take a look at that part of your character which rubs people the wrong way. If your business is being criticized, put it through every known test in the hope of finding its deficiencies. If you think every knock is a boost, make a list on your pad of all the men and institutions you have heard unpleasant things about in the last ten days—and ask yourself how they stack up against those who have not been attacked.

Why do you like to read complimentary things about yourself in the morning paper? Because every knock's a boost? Why does your company advertise? Because every knock is *not* a boost. Why is it, that the liars you dislike most are those who have said ugly things about you? The answer is obvious: you're afraid of knocks. You recognize the dynamite wrapped up in them.

Flannery is right. Any knocker can find at least two listeners. And a knock has a louder, longer echo than any other human noise. Don't fool yourself. It is never a boost. If weakness or neglect on your part has provoked it, it's a kick over the heart. And kicks over the heart are dangerous things—ask Jim Corbett!



The Treasure and the Secret Word

By Thomas McMorrow

Author of "On Advice of Julius Delile," Etc.

It is not wise to tell your secrets to a parrot, generally speaking, but if you make your confidence in Chinese you ought to be safe; that is, while the bird is in your keeping

DOWN on West End Avenue in the Sixties there is a little eating house called the Coffee Bowl. Its custom comes from the roaring factories and snoring garages about it, from the grunting freight trains of the New York Central, hard by, and from honest sailors wending their ways to sell smuggled laces and Cuban cigars in the homes of wealth and magnificence farther up West End Avenue.

The Coffee Bowl is run, ostensibly, by the oysterman, a man so round in bulk and detail as to suggest the sleek and slightly walrus. He is round-eyed, round-faced, round-bodied, and a long black mustache falls in a round cascade before his mouth. There are people indeed on West End Avenue who scoff at the oysterman's claim, and insist that the real proprietor and managing genius of the Coffee Bowl is one Psittacus Erythacus, an Asiatic of brilliant garb, glib tongue, and vigilant eye, who sits behind the counter and makes cutting remarks while the oysterman bustles about.

One winter's night the oysterman was bending over his stove behind the low partition compounding an imported Worcestershire sauce for the delectation of his patrons. It was warm and light and cheerful in the little restaurant, and the rowdy wind from the water side had pressed longingly against the steaming window and breathed hungrily upon it till it was all frosted. It crept about, and shook the transom, and stealthily it tried the door. The door flew open with a bang, and the wind shouldered joyfully in and proceeded to hurl paper napkins about and to tweak the flames of the gas jets, and to ruffle the feathers of Psittacus Erythacus. The said parrot, P. Erythacus, screamed indignantly, and the oysterman ran to the door and forced it back against the ruffianly intruder.

The oysterman lingered, gazing through

an opalescent pane, while the discomfited wind howled bitterly in the cheerless street. He saw it catch a wayfarer by the coat tails and whirl him about and try to dash him into the gutter, so that the fellow fled into the Coffee Bowl from its rage.

The refugee gasped and made for the red-hot stove, while the oysterman retreated behind his counter and waited an order.

The visitor was in no hurry to leave the genial stove, and he mumbled and chafed his discolored hands together and gazed with sensuous delight into the glowing coals. The oysterman sniffed the scorching Worcestershire.

"Well?" he suggested. "What will you have?"

"A raw, cold night, boss," said the visitor, a low-set, swarthy man, whose countenance had been tanned by wind and sun till its surface was the uniform brown of mahogany.

"You can get that out in the street," said the restaurateur. "I'm by way of keeping a restaurant myself."

"It's a restaurant, eh?" The wayfarer gazed about. "Sure enough, it is a sort of a restaurant, isn't it? But I'm not particular. Let me have a cup coffee."

The oysterman drew a mug of the brown fluid and pushed it over the oilcloth counter.

"Drink up quick," he said gruffly. "I got to close up."

The mahogany man drew a chair to the stove, seated himself, placed his hobnailed heels upon the fender, and blew leisurely upon his beverage. The oysterman turned his back to avoid conversation, and fed a cracker to the imperial parrot, whereupon that scansorial bird emitted an inarticulate, gabbling cry.

"A fine bird you got there, boss," said the mahogany man.

The oysterman grunted by way of refus-

ing the extended topic, and the mahogany man sipped his coffee, his shrewd dark eyes intent upon the great gray bird.

"I know a man wants to buy a parrot like that," he said. "You want to sell him, boss? He'd give twenty-five dollars for a bird could talk like that one can."

"That parrot ain't for sale at no price at all," growled the oysterman. "Anyways, he ain't the bird your man wants, because this here parrot don't talk."

"He don't *what*?" said the mahogany man surprisingly. "Did I hear you say that bird don't talk?"

"You heard me," said the oysterman.

"The bird's yourn," said the mahogany man, "and if you say he ain't for sale, why, what you say goes. But that bird talks as good as you any day in the week—and just as polite, too."

"Well, I say he don't!" retorted the oysterman.

"All right, boss," submitted the mahogany man. "I won't give you an argument, seeing as you're probably ignorant of the language, and mean what you say. But if anybody else but you said so I'd call him a liar!"

"Looker here—what's that parrot been talking?"

"Chinese," said the mahogany man.

The oysterman pulled the imported Worcestershire from the fire and busied himself at funneling it into imported bottles. From time to time he darted a searching glance at the mahogany man.

"You're a liar," he said.

The guest shrugged his wide shoulders. "You're the first man ever called me that, boss, excepting him that's in the hospital and two that's going about like you and me, except on crutches. But what you say goes, seeing your ignorance. That bird don't talk Chinese, and I never been in China, and I don't talk Chinese myself. You know, or you wouldn't go and call a decent sailor-man a name like that. So long, boss, and thank you kindly for your opinion."

"What's your rush?" called the oysterman placatingly. "It's bitter cold out there. Have another cup of coffee."

"You're a sailor?" he inquired a moment later, leaning over the counter to the recumbent mahogany man. "And you been in China? Well, sailor, what was it the parrot said?"

"Supposing we put it this way," said the

sailor with an appearance of caution. "You tell what you know about the parrot, and I'll tell what the parrot said. And if anything comes of it we'll split fair and square."

"Very well," agreed the oysterman. "I bought that bird a month ago in a store on Amsterdam Avenue, and I give ten dollars for him. That's all his story."

"Where's that store?" inquired the sailor. "What do you care?" replied the oysterman. "Tell me what the bird said."

"Maybe I didn't rightly catch his very words," returned the sailor evasively. "It's a hard language to rightly understand from the mouth of a Chinaman, let alone a bloody parrot. But I could tell you for instance that his name is Peek-why."

"Peek-why," repeated the oysterman suspiciously. And at the sound of the queer name the great bird slanted his head, and again he emitted his singsong cry.

"You hear him?" chuckled the sailor. "You hear him, boss? 'Peek-why, that's me!' he says as plain as you could wish!"

He rose and stamped to the door. "You and me will just slide around to-morrow morning to that store on Amsterdam Avenue which sells parrots who talk Chinese. There's a powerful smell of money about that bird, boss. Watch out for me in the morning!"

"Just a minute!" cried the oysterman.

"To-morrow morning!" shouted the sailor. And the embittered wind lurking outside snatched the words, and bent and twisted them frenziedly, and flung them with a howl of triumph across the threshold and into the face of the oysterman.

When the sailor opened the door of the Coffee Bowl the following morning he found an oysterman quite eaten up with impatience. He seized his hat and jacket, rolled his apron up under his belt and started for the door.

"A minute," requested the sailor. "Take along that parrot. Wrap up the cage good so as our prima donna don't take cold. It's all day with our treasure hunting if that bird gets any rust into his pipes."

"What do we want with the parrot? You know what he said."

"The Chinese is a queer lingo," said the sailor. "And moreover, oysterman, if you're going to tell me how to go about this business you can quit right now, and stay in your greasy little doggerly. No offense in

plain speaking, mate. Here, put that tablecloth around the cage—so!”

They set out. The teeth of the sailor rattled like dice in his head, and the oysterman's well-fed cheeks developed areas of purple, while the parrot scolded when the curious zephyrs raised the corners of his red tent.

“A brisk weather, mate!” said the sailor. “How'd you like to be beating to looard with a bone in your teeth on a day like this? Do haul in on that parrot.”

“Cut that sea talk!” mumbled the oysterman through his mustache irritably. “I don't believe you're no more of a seaman than I am, and you might as well know I'm wise to that much!”

This remark took the sailor aback. He stopped short and grasped the oysterman by the shoulder. “Listen,” he said earnestly. “We're treasure hunting now, understand, and we got to stand together. Maybe I know more about this business than I'm telling and maybe not—when you catch me double-crossing you, we split partners, but till you do you don't make no such foolish crack again as you made right now!”

“I think you're some kind of a confidence man, if you ask me,” grumbled the oysterman, “seeing as how I feed a hundred sailors a week in the Coffee Bowl. However, I'll stick. Come, sailor, let's get on, or we'll be perished!”

“Here's the place I bought the parrot,” he said.

He turned into a store in whose window was displayed a motherly-looking dachshund and a litter of white mice upon a base of sawdust.

“Where did you get this here bird, skipper?” said the sailor, as his companion placed the cage upon the counter in the malodorous store, and revealed to the proprietor a parrot much swollen by cold.

“You remember you sold him to me about a month ago,” put in the oysterman accusingly.

“What's the matter with him?” asked the proprietor. “There ain't nobody been claiming him? Wait up, and I'll see who I bought him from.

“I bought this bird,” he said, “off of a young fellow by the name of Howard Cameron, who gave me some address on West End Avenue. You might go over there and make inquiries. I lost the address.”

“We'll set a course for West End

Avenue,” said the sailor, as they left the store. “And then we'll overhaul this Howard Cameron, who sells parrots which speak Chinese!”

They bent their steps toward West End Avenue, and then bore northward between the ranked homes of wealth and magnificence. The sailor paused uncertainly before a regal apartment house, and spoke with the uniformed doorman.

“Cameron?” repeated the doorman. “Howard Cameron, yes! The service entrance is around the corner on Eighty-ninth Street.”

“We thank you very kindly,” acknowledged the sailor, “but our business is with Howard Cameron, and not his cook. Announce us!”

“Who shall I say is calling?” inquired the doorman with punctilious politeness.

“Mr. Oysterman and Mr. Peek-why, to call on Mr. Cameron,” he informed the smiling young lady at the switchboard.

She conversed with the instrument.

“What's the business?”

“It's about a lost treasure,” supplied the sailor. “Two parties calling with information about a lost treasure!”

“You can go right up,” said the young lady, after imparting the nature of the errand to her switchboard.

The sailor and the oysterman crossed the stately hall to the elevator, walking considerably upon the exposed marble of the floor to spare the Oriental rugs. They were rushed aloft to the apartment of Howard Cameron.

The door was opened by a tall young man with the smoked complexion of a night owl. “Well?” he asked brusquely, contemplating with smoky and discontented eyes the bizarre company which had been raised to his door.

“Mr. Howard Cameron?” The sailor made the young man a clumsy bow. “I am the sailor, and this is the oysterman, and this is Peek-why. We have come here to talk to you about a lost treasure.”

After momentary indecision the young man led the way into the living room of the small apartment. He stood, leaning against a table.

“Well?” he repeated.

“Mr. Cameron,” said the sailor directly, “we're going to talk to you like one gentleman to another. Me and the oysterman have got hold of something that will be a

good thing for all three of us, if we can get together. First off, you used to own this parrot?"

"I did. Or at least Pihkwei belonged to my uncle."

"So far good," nodded the sailor. "That much we learned in the bird store. And this name Pihkwei is by way of being Chinese, isn't it?"

"It is Chinese, I suppose," replied the young man restively. "My uncle spent fifty years in China, and he brought the bird home from there."

"We're coming to it," exclaimed the sailor eagerly. "Mr. Cameron, was your uncle ever looking for a lost treasure? We got wind of the fact that there is a treasure, and it's mixed up with your uncle, and this here parrot. Perhaps we could find the treasure without your help, but if you'll come in with us and open up as to what you may know, we'll split it three ways. Is that your idea, oysterman?"

The oysterman nodded in a state of complete subjection.

"May I ask who you men are?" requested Howard Cameron.

"A very proper question," admitted the sailor. "This is the oysterman, a business man of good repute, who owns the parrot, and runs the Coffee Bowl which is on West End Avenue near Sixtieth Street, and where we can be found any hour of the day or night."

Howard Cameron rose and curtly dismissed his guests.

"I know nothing whatever about your treasure," he said. "This is the way out."

The sailor shrugged his shoulders. "As you like, Mr. Cameron. It'll be more work, but we'll find it just the same, and the split will be bigger when there's only two of us. Is that your idea, oysterman?"

"Suits me," confirmed the restaurateur.

The visitors clumped their way to the elevator and so to the street. The oysterman glanced up, and saw the pale face of Howard Cameron peering down at them from between the parted curtains at a window.

"Where do we start to look for the treasure?" he asked the sailor with implicit faith.

"A good place for you to start," said the tyrannical seaman, "would be back in the Coffee Bowl. You rush back to your doggerly, and wait for that sick-looking youngster to call on you. He'll be there, never fear—we got the old iron sunk into him

now. And say, when he heaves to in the Coffee Bowl you call me up at the number on this card, and till I get there don't you say aye, yes, or no—or that treasure'll be lost for good."

The oysterman returned to his shop, and fidgeted through the endless afternoon, putting garlic into his customers' rice pudding and salt on their pie, and sending them heartily to the devil when they complained of these strange condiments.

The shades of night were being pulled down along West End Avenue when the smoky-eyed young man entered the Coffee Bowl. He picked his way across the cluttered floor to the counter behind which stood the oysterman flanked by huge urns which gleamed faintly in the early lamplight.

"I want to see you about that matter that we talked over this morning," he said.

The oysterman went to the coin-box telephone on the wall, and called the number given him by the sailor. "Tell him it's the oysterman!" he directed, and replaced the receiver.

"If you'll sit down a bit," he said to Howard Cameron, "these grumblers will get through their suppers, and then we can talk."

The young man pulled a chair to the drafty window, turned his back to the room, and sat staring into the darkening street. The oysterman went about prodding his customers into more hasty deglutition, and from time to time fixing a penetrating look upon the nape of the young man's neck.

The sailor entered the eating house as the last customer left in a gale of profanity.

"Thought it over, eh?" he greeted Howard Cameron. "That's wise—the easiest way's best. Let's just put this lock on the door, and pull down that shade, and then you and me and the oysterman will be all set."

"Now tell us about your uncle, Mr. Cameron," he directed, when the three had gathered about the snoring stove.

"My uncle," said the young man, "went to China over fifty years ago as a stowaway on a freighter. He entered the service of a Chinese house and was advanced to a partnership in his later years. He came back to New York about a year ago, having retired from business, and he then looked up his relatives. He had never revisited

America during the fifty years and I was now his sole surviving kinsman.

"He was a very queer old fellow, and was really more of a Chinaman than an American. He brought home this parrot, Pihkwei, and I put it mildly when I say that he thought more of that miserable bird than he did of me, his own flesh and blood. Of course he had to admit my claim, for common decency. He took a furnished house in West Seventy-second Street and persuaded me to come and live with him. We were living there together when he was killed."

"Killed!" echoed the sailor. "Then he is dead?"

"That would be the normal inference," continued the level, sneering voice. "A thief broke into the house one night and shot the old man dead. I rushed to the library and saw him lying on the floor, and I saw the murderer running through the hall and out the door. He ran down to Columbus Avenue and disappeared."

"I remember the robbery now!" cried the round-eyed oysterman. "Cameron was the name—and I remember wondering why you didn't take after that there murderer, seeing as how your uncle was killed."

"I did not know that my uncle had received a mortal wound, and saving his life appeared to me more important than to apprehend his assailant," replied Howard Cameron. "I went to him, saw the gravity of the wound, and called up the authorities. But I presume these facts are not in point just now."

"So he's dead," mourned the sailor. He caressed his blue chin. "And did the old man never speak to you about a lost treasure?"

"He did not," replied Howard Cameron.

The sailor knitted his black brows and sat staring dejectedly at the sanded floor. The oysterman teetered back and gazed with an assumption of meditation at the blackened ceiling of the Coffee Bowl. The young man's dull and cunning eyes flickered from one to the other.

"I might add," he said, breaking a silence, "that my uncle left a will."

"And did it say anything about the treasure?" asked the sailor, looking up.

The young man passed him a sheet of paper. "You may look at it. The original is filed down in the surrogate's, and this is

a copy. You will see a paragraph there referring to the parrot."

The sailor took the paper, and read the contents aloud to the oysterman.

I hereby bequeath the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to my said nephew, Howard Cameron. But this bequest is upon the express condition that he will at all times care for and cherish my parrot, Pihkwei, while the said Pihkwei lives. And further that he do devote the space of one hour each day to the study of Oriental literatures, and especially to the language and literature of China.

I do hereby bequeath to my said nephew such of my books as appertain to that country.

My reasons for so providing are twofold. I wish firstly to assure the future welfare of the said Pihkwei, who is very dear to me, having been my pet and companion for forty years in the land of China. And also it is my aim to strengthen my said nephew in kindness, consideration toward the helpless, and in those habits of sobriety and study which must form the basis of his own success and happiness.

"I might add," said Howard Cameron, "that I have not received the two hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"You might add," retorted the sailor, glancing at the parrot, "that you didn't do what your uncle told you! But why didn't you get the money?"

"I have not requested your criticism upon my actions," said Howard Cameron. "I consulted a lawyer, and was advised that I would receive the bequest by operation of law, even though I failed to observe my uncle's absurd conditions, and thereupon I sold the books, and got rid of that noisy pest, Pihkwei. But when I applied to my uncle's bankers, in my capacity of executor of the will, they informed me that my uncle had drawn out his entire balance one week before his sad death."

"Hurrah!" cried the sailor. "Now we're on the trail of the treasure!"

Howard Cameron stared the sailor into decorum. "He received it in bills of large denominations, and I have been unable to trace that vast sum of money to this day."

"You looked well for it?" said the sailor, with mockery in his eyes. "You looked carefully?"

"Everywhere," the young man assured him.

The sailor leaned over and slapped him on the back in irrepressible excitement. "And if I was to tell you," he asked in a suppressed shout, "that we can lay our fingers on that sweet lump of money this very blessed night?"

"I'd say that I would make it well worth your while," replied Howard Cameron, growing pale.

The sailor shook his head. "That's very nice," he said, "but me and the oysterman are not looking for wages. We'll want something handsome, we will. We'll want twenty-five thousand dollars!"

"That will be all right," agreed Howard Cameron instantly.

"Apiece," amended the sailor, with a gulp. "Twenty-five thousand apiece! What do you say to that, oysterman?"

But not Torquemada and all his men could have drawn a word from the oysterman. His eyes blinked piteously and he made a gurgling noise in his mustache.

"And that will be all right, too," announced Howard Cameron, receiving the amendment with a vicious flash of his big, yellow teeth.

The sailor regarded him with disappointment, betraying his belief that he had bidden too low. "Just what did that bird man give you for that parrot?" he asked.

"Five dollars, if you must know."

"A measly five? It wasn't worth your while to disobey your old uncle for that."

"Sir," said Howard Cameron fiercely, "I have not asked for your opinion. Permit me to draw that to your notice, for the second time."

"It'll be your opinion in a minute, too, mister," grunted the sailor, stretching himself enjoyably. "You know who told us where that money was hid? Well, it was that same blessed parrot, which you sold once for five dollars!"

Howard Cameron started as though struck. Then he laughed, but the effort was obvious. "This is your idea of a joke," he sneered.

"If it is a joke," said the sailor grimly, "it is your uncle's, and not mine. He hid that lump of money, and the only being he whispered the secret to was the only living being he cared a whoop for, and that was his old parrot. He taught the secret to him in Chinese, a lingo I happen to understand, and all his said nephew had to do was to take care of that parrot and study to learn some Chinese, and the money would have fell into his said lap. Instead, he went and seen a lawyer, and it's going to cost him just fifty thousand dollars, less the said five-case note."

"Now that I have your secret," said the

young man, "I shall certainly not pay you any such ridiculous sum of money!"

"For those few words," retorted the sailor sternly, "we'd be justified in cabbaging the whole lump, seeing the kind of skunk we got to deal with! Don't do us no favors, please. Do you want to call it off? You try any nastiness with us, young fellow, and we'll wring that parrot's neck, and split two hundred and fifty thousand dollars between us!"

"Come, come," snarled Howard Cameron, with distorted face, "I am a man of honor, and a gentleman, and I will not take your insults! Proceed to carry out your agreement without any more to do!"

"We're not gentlemen," said the sailor, with a lazy lift of his shaggy brows, "but we are men of our word. You come with us, and we'll hand you a cold two hundred thousand dollars inside the hour."

He rose and went to the telephone and spoke into it, while the oysterman camouflaged his greasy apron again, and knotted a woolen muffler around his thick throat.

"I'm getting a taxi," said the sailor. "We're moneyed men from this night on, and we might as well travel like quality."

The lights of a taxicab shone on the snow outside the door, and the three went out and clambered into it.

"Give your uncle's address in Seventy-second Street to the driver," requested the sailor.

The occupants sat in silence while the cab ran through the night, except for a muttering from the corner filled with the bulky oysterman. A sharp ear might have caught this phrase repeated endlessly: "*Twenty-five thousand dollars!*"

"This is the house," said Howard Cameron.

The cab had stopped before a spacious brownstone front near Columbus Avenue. The shades of the house were drawn, but a light shone through the chinks of the blinds on the basement windows. The sailor sprang out and rang the bell, and a frowzy old woman answered the door.

"You are the caretaker?" questioned Howard Cameron. "I am Mr. Cameron, who formerly lived here. Kindly permit us to go through the house."

"We must go to the library where your uncle was shot," said the sailor, when the beldame had permitted them to enter.

The library was on the second floor of the

house, being immediately above the basement. The sailor took the candle from the hand of the old woman and placed it on the mantelpiece below the gilt mirror. He went to the farther end of the room, and stood between the tall walnut bookcases which framed a doorway there.

"Where did your uncle use to sit in the evenings and where was the parrot?" he queried with an air of perplexity.

"Here," said Howard Cameron, "near to this window looking toward the park. The parrot's cage was beside him, but the bird sat ordinarily upon the arm of his chair."

With a cry of enlightenment the sailor went to the indicated place. He ran his eyes over the floor, which was laid in parquet squares of shining golden oak. Then he advanced over the squares, counting, and when he had counted to nine he turned at right angles and advanced again, stopping on the eighth square. He stood upon one foot and bore heavily upon the square, and it complained beneath his weight.

"I have it!" he cried. "Fetch me that hammer, mother, that I saw in the hall downstairs!"

The old woman hobbled away, and returned with a small sledge.

"The very thing!" cried the sailor.

He knelt on one knee, and struck a heavy blow upon the floor. At the second blow a strip of parquet fell in, and the remainder of the square soon yielded beneath the blows of the hammer. The sailor thrust his hand into the gap, and lifted into view a cubical box or chest, of heavy bronze, and some eight inches in its several dimensions. The sheen of the candle was reflected in its warm brown side, and threw into relief on its carved lid a design of struggling dragons, palpably Chinese.

"Glory be to God," quavered the crone peering from the doorway.

"And now," laughed the sailor gleefully, "back to the Coffee Bowl for the split!"

"Let me carry the box," demanded Howard Cameron in a sibilant voice.

"I'll carry it," said the sailor, watching him hostilely. "We got nothing but your word for our fifty thousand dollars, and I'd rather hold onto it now than have to ask for it back!"

They went out to the cab, and Howard Cameron and the oysterman entered into it, and waited for the sailor to climb after. He stood upon the sidewalk, holding the

bronze box under his arm, and spoke to the chauffeur.

"Back to the Coffee Bowl," he said. "Drive like the devil and all!"

"Right!" cried the chauffeur. And he reached behind him, and seized the door, slammed it to, and the cab leaped away like a startled deer and left the sailor behind.

"Wait!" bawled Howard Cameron, battering at the door. It had locked, or jammed, else he would have flung himself headlong to the street. To do so would have been to invite death, for the chauffeur drove the cab as though the very devil indeed were snatching at his tail lamp. On two wheels he rounded into West End Avenue, and down that thoroughfare, dark save for the bands of light before the doors of apartment houses, he sped like light. The cab bounded like a goat and groaned under the strain, and the passengers were hurled about within it until the joints of their bones loosened, and the hair rose on their heads. It seemed that scarcely a minute had flown when they tumbled forward as the cab halted before the Coffee Bowl.

"We're here!" cried the chauffeur gayly, as he opened the door.

"You wretched fool!" shouted Howard Cameron, quite beside himself. "What have you done?"

The oysterman hobbled into his store, and sought liniment for his barked shins. Through the window he saw the chauffeur expostulating with Howard Cameron, and offering to strike him with a heavy monkey wrench.

And then the sailor turned the corner of Sixtieth Street bearing the bronze box under his arm, and composedly he entered into the Coffee Bowl.

He deposited the little chest on a table. "You might have waited for me, I think," he said. "Have you got a can opener or something there? Let's get this thing open!"

He went to the door and called to the chauffeur. "We want a witness to this," he said, "so there'll be no argument about it afterward."

The oysterman provided a chisel and a hammer, and with a smart blow the sailor broke the lock. He threw back the lid of the chest.

It was empty, except for a torn scrap of paper lying on the bottom. The sailor

picked out the scrap, ran his eyes over it rapidly, and handed it to Howard Cameron, who read it with the oysterman looking over his shoulder. The only line upon it was a scrawl in pencil:

I'm sorry I had to shoot the old man after he showed me this. Look no further for the money. I've taken it. THE BURGLAR.

The sailor shrugged his shoulders, but his right hand was clutching something in his pocket, and his eyes never left Howard Cameron's face. "So we're too late," he said. "The fellow who broke in that night and shot the old man like you told us, he found the box first!"

With a groan of conviction the oysterman sank into a chair, and hid his face in his hands. But Howard Cameron started forward, and threw out his arm, with rigid forefinger pointing at the sailor.

"It's a lie!" he snarled, from the hoarse depths of his chest. *"No burglar shot the old man! No burglar broke into that house! There was no burglar!"*

He ceased speaking; his mouth fell open, and a dead whiteness supplanted the red fury in his cheek. For the sailor was smiling, the cold and contented smile of the

hunter who has struck down his woodland game.

"Our opinion all along, but we didn't want to make a mistake, and so this little comedy," he said softly. "And now who fired the shot that killed old John Cameron?" He threw back his coat lapel, and an official badge shone under his armpit. "Howard Cameron, you are under arrest on a charge of murder!"

A few days later the sailor appeared again in the Coffee Bowl. He fed a sweet cracker to the parrot, Pihkwei—genus *Psittacus* *Erythacus*—and again the bird emitted that queer, gabbling cry.

"Chinese?" grinned the sailor. "Very likely. I got the idea from the will, which I read in the surrogate's office, while verifying the motive. I knew that the young man had been hunting high and low for that money, and I had found out that old John Cameron had made the acquaintance of Wall Street in his last days under an assumed name. You remember the tremendous tumble in stocks when Germany made that peace bid about seven months ago? That's where the poor old fellow buried that two hundred and fifty thousand dollars!"



WHEN PAT HARRISON WAS A WAITER

PAT HARRISON, congressman from the sixth Mississippi district and a candidate for United States senator, "worked his way" through Louisiana State University. One of his jobs was waiting on the table at a house where many of the students of the university boarded. It was a job that required not only some dexterity but a good deal of patience and tact, especially in humoring the whims of one particular student.

Shortly after Mr. Harrison entered Congress, he ran over to Philadelphia one day and had lunch at a restaurant. After he had given his order, the waiter reappeared and said:

"Sorry, sir, but you'll have to wait a bit. The cook misunderstood me, sir. He has cooked mackerel instead of shad."

"Never mind about that, waiter," said the congressman. "Just bring it on as it is—there are fewer bones in the mackerel, anyhow."

Everything went smoothly through the rest of the meal. As the congressman pushed back his chair and slipped a half dollar under the edge of the plate, something in his movement aroused memories in the waiter's mind.

"Excuse me, sir," he said, "but isn't this Pat Harrison?"

It was. And the waiter was the particular student who had caused him so much trouble when he himself was a waiter at Louisiana State.

Shortly after that, the waiter was offered an important and responsible government position. He doesn't know that congressional influence had anything to do with it. But he has made a little bit better than good.

The Eyes of Buddha

By Carroll K. Michener

Poor little Summer Almond was sold into bondage. Nevertheless, she learned to be happy, and her master learned to love her. One of her favorite offices was feeding him melon seed. Out of such a harmless occupation grew tragedy

BUYING the big rain god was no more eccentric than most of the things Jordan did. It was perhaps even less deserving of note than the acquisition of little Summer Almond.

The ethics of either transaction need not be discussed here—for if it comes to that Jordan was by no means an ethical person. But whatever of reproach attached to the purchase of Summer Almond, there was none in the purchase of the god, for he was a much discredited deity. After a long period of drought the villagers had hauled him forth from his temple and set him to fry in the blistering sun whose rays he had been too indolent to assuage with rain.

The most surprising thing about the rain-god transaction was that the village elders should have been willing to make the sale. It was an illuminating commentary upon the iconoclasm of the times—the piping days after the revolution. There was only a single sheepish stipulation in the terms of sale to serve as a reminder of the past and of its lingering strength of superstition. That was a provision for performance of the accustomed reverences at stated intervals, and for a house over the god's clay head.

Now as to Summer Almond—her head was by no means of clay, and her eyes were shiny and brown, not mere dusky slits in a hideous physiognomy such as that of the god. Warm blood circulated in her veins, whereas it was century-dried superstition, if anything, that animated the god.

Things worse than possession by a foreigner of uncertain ethics might have happened to Summer Almond, as a brief scrutiny of her career will indicate. For instance, she might—and this was quite as probable as anything—have been sold into prostitution. Or she might have become a second wife—to speak plainly, a concubine—in which case she would no doubt have suffered intolerable abuse, and been subjected to unremitting toil. Perhaps in the

end, as happens with so many second wives, she would have been driven to suicide, either for revenge or for relief—or both.

But beyond these possibilities is one that would have settled her sorrows in a most summary manner. It was quite remarkable that, having been born into the family of a miserable ricksha coolie she should have escaped infanticide long enough to reach an age when selling into slavery was possible. There are those, perhaps, who would offer arguments that drowning when she was a week old, or being thrown into a refuse heap to squawl and starve a brief hour or two of life away, would have been far preferable to the later uncertainty of slavery. But whatever there is to be said on this point, it is doubtful if life was intolerable for Summer Almond, even on that dark night when she stood clinging to her father's legs in the gateway of the walled city, listening to his advertisement of her small person. Even to be sold to a "foreign devil" had not the power to rob her child's imagination of all its small anticipations of life.

Buying Summer Almond was, of course, entirely unpremeditated on the part of Jordan. It was due principally to that rascal Untermeyer, who was an opium smuggler, and who was worse than that if any one knew the whole truth.

Untermeyer and Jordan had been strolling through the native city in the midst of the Chinese New Year festivity. They spent an hour just at midnight when the city's turbulence was at its height, edging their way through streets filled with a holiday crowd, with the noise of crackers, and with shifting colors brought to life under a myriad of flaring lights. They slipped from one main thoroughfare to another through crisscross alleys black and noisome, and full of nocturnal uncertainties. They jostled rich merchants, elbow to elbow in long queues with leprous beggars, waiting a turn of obeisance in the crowded temples,

and took their irreverent part in the burning of paper silver for the use of gods and ancestors, in blazing bronze censers at the temple doors.

They had been befouled by the clutching hands of so many beggars by the time they reached the north gate on the way home that they would have brushed past Summer Almond had not her bellowing father pushed her into a cringing prostration at their feet. A crowd circled them, gaping, and joined Jordan in listening to the repulsive oratory of the child's parent.

"What's it all about?" inquired Untermeyer when he had lifted the frightened child to her feet. "Can you understand the lingo?"

"The beast is selling her," Jordan explained. "He sees a bigger price in a foreign purchaser, so he's willing to give up her soul to the 'foreign devils.' Want her?"

"What do you mean—"

"Just that. Want to buy her? Come along, then. Let's get out of this din—and the smell. I never will be able to understand how the Chinese live in the midst of such stench."

But Untermeyer stood still, staring at the child, who once more shrank to the refuge of her father's gaunt legs. She was gazing at Untermeyer with an expression like that of a bird looking into the throat of a cobra.

"Say, now—why not?" he called out to Jordan. "She's pretty, eh?" And he pinched the olive roundness of the child's cheeks.

"Come along, you fool. What would you do with her? She can't be more than six. Has that rice wine driven you crazy?"

"Ask the coolie what he wants for her," persisted Untermeyer, and with a sniff of impatience Jordan began a cross-examination in Chinese. After many words, during the utterance of which the child's round eyes never left his face, Jordan announced that thirty Mexican dollars was the man's "last price."

"Don't give it to him all at once, if you're bound to make a fool of yourself. Keep five dollars to shake him off with when we cross the canal."

Untermeyer tossed the money at the coolie's feet and reached for the girl's hand. The coolie pushed her toward him, muttering in his scramble for her price, but the child emitted a deathly shriek and running to Jordan kotowed before him until he

picked her up and carried her to his ricksha.

"You're not much of a magnet with the women," he chided Untermeyer. "She's afraid of you."

When they reached Jordan's compound and had mixed whisky and soda in the combined office and sitting room where he did most of his living, the question arose as to just what to do with her.

"Don't know—haven't the least idea," responded Untermeyer to Jordan's persistent inquiries.

The immediate upshot of it was that they put her to bed, tentatively, under a camel's hair blanket on a big couch, and fell to playing pinochle. The night was consumed, and so was much whisky-soda, when they finished. The cards were against Untermeyer—more than he was able to pay.

The two seemed to have forgotten the child, who was not asleep as they supposed, but lay peeping from beneath the blanket, judging them with the uncanniness of innocent youth. As he fumbled with his purse Untermeyer caught sight of her, and gave a slow laugh. This set off with an emphasis lent by the sickly dawn certain bestial lines in his face that were not entirely associated with his general unwholesomeness of feature. They had to do somewhat with a huge wart that adorned one side of his pock-marked nose, and with a livid scar that ran from his brow in a jagged line well down the side of his left cheek. It might well have been caused by glass broken under the sort of blow that is apt to characterize a saloon brawl. But in the absence of analysis his appearance was enough to justify the child's impression of extreme unholiness. He looked as much the devil as any of the evil ones in Chinese mythology.

"Quits!" he called out, thickly. "The kid's yours. If anything, you owe me money, but I'll call it square."

The child seemed to have understood. Before Jordan could open his lips to renounce the bargain—if he had any such intention—she was at his feet again, bobbing her shaved forehead against the floor like some animated toy, and beseeching his protection from this evil one and all devils beside. He lifted her and answered in her own tongue. From the arm of the chair she slipped confidently to his lap, and smiled as she looked up confidently from the corner of

his shoulder. Untermeyer stalked away, chuckling drunkenly, leaving them together.

And that was how Summer Almond came among foreign devils. It was the beginning of Jordan's godship. For in spite of the beatings of his half-caste woman, the fat Lulu, and her threats of sudden death, the child developed a reverence for Jordan that was far greater than any the people at the mission school were able to inspire in her for the good "Yesu."

In six years she had become almost a woman. In fact, her foster mother, the half-caste, began to cherish a subtle jealousy of her. The child's angles filled suddenly with the budding curves of womanhood, and she began to manifest a more pronounced and indefinitely differentiated affection for Jordan.

"That brat's in love with you," Lulu remarked to him one day.

Jordan stared at her, dully understanding.

"Remember what I say. And the first symptom I see of any foolishness between you, into the river she goes. Oh, I know you old men. Fifty loves fifteen."

"Get out of here!" snarled Jordan, resisting an impulse to hurl an iron inkstand at her retreating back.

Jordan was fifty, it was true, and at the point in life where it hurts most to be in full consciousness of what might have been—and what might not have been. He had a most poignant consciousness of Lulu, now that she no longer possessed the seductive beauty that characterizes young women of bicolored parentage.

There was no way of ridding himself of her now. They had lived together too long. Even the unsympathetic gulfs between them were a uniting bond. They had married, too—one of the unconscious reforms wrought by the Summer Almond. That had come about when Jordan presented the child at his mission school. He had been received with reluctance, and there had been conferences with the missionary and the missionary's wife in which it was set forth that Jordan must marry his woman and legally adopt the child.

These were grievous concessions for a man not given to great respect either for convention or for law. But the influence of the child upon him brought a speedy compliance.

There was perhaps no one on the whole of the China coast who knew the full meas-

ure of Jordan's particular variety of outlawry—least of all the worshipful Summer Almond. It would not have mattered to her how deeply dyed he was. Jordan was not the person to indulge in confidences, and legends had not followed him from the States. He had come in the days when one did not inquire too closely into the affairs of fellow expatriates. White folk were not too insistent upon knowing whether a man's past was characterized most by sin or by saintliness.

But if there were crimes in Jordan's remote past, nothing in his life since its transference to the China coast had brought him into collision with the law. Still, the law is not too vigilant in the East. There may have been improprieties in his enterprises which escaped sleeping justice. There were, for instance, his dealings with Untermeyer. There were whispers about an illicit trade in opium. There was an understanding, too, that of late coolies were groaning in and out of the big godowns next the shed where Jordan housed his Buddha, bearing quantities of boxes labeled "hardware." It was not unnatural for the natives to conclude that this was an underground source of arms and ammunition for the upriver revolutionists.

Jordan's secrecies were pretty safe in the hands of the natives, for he was a "foreign devil" who understood them and was of value to them. They would have come to Jordan for help and solace, or for wisdom of the West, sooner than they would have gone to the missionaries. Among other things—a vague hint as to his past—he was something of an apothecary. His office looked the part, for he had rows and rows of bottles, and their contents many a time were invoked by his Chinese neighbors when the native doctors had failed with their herbs and hot needles.

Though Summer Almond found him always godlike in her eyes, there really was no more of that quality in Jordan's outward semblance than there was in the rain deity reposing in the shed. He was gruff, gray and aloof. She saw little of him, and he seemed always to be making renewed discoveries of her existence. Yet so potent were these discoveries that they developed usually into amazing romps.

In the intervals between these delights life was not a song for Summer Almond unless she could pursue it out of sight of the half-

caste. To do that required craft. The half-caste was persistent in a desire to make Summer Almond a personal servant. But there were subtleties in the child that partially defeated this ambition. Though she was forbidden to leave the compound, its rambling walls and sheds offered plenty of opportunity for deceit. There was a screen of split bamboo, for instance, that could be made to yield egress for Summer Almond's slender body. The Chinese servants, too, who adored the child, found many liberties for her, so that she lived in effect a double life. Within the compound, and at the mission school, she was a foreigner, but on her hoydenish escapes into the life of her native country she remained, outside the compound, as much of a Chinese in instinct and habit as any of the four hundred millions.

When escape from the vigilance of the half-caste was impossible in any other way, there was one refuge that never failed Summer Almond. Not even the servants knew of it. She had discovered one day, not long after Jordan bought the god, that there was a mysterious cavity in its huge clay torso. At first she peered into the opening, which was at the small of the god's back, with childish fear. But curiosity at last overcame her instinctive superstition. One day she climbed into the cavity, and standing upright found she could peer out into the courtyard through the slits in the god's eyes. There was a ledge on which she could sit, dangling her legs, and all the time peeping through the dusky vents.

She found the interior of the idol a sure retreat, especially because it could be reached by a roundabout way. Displacing a brick or two from the rear wall of the tumble-down shed gave her entrance out of sight of any one in the courtyard, and she could come and go without being observed.

Even now that she was twelve, and had become almost too large to enter her retreat—due to those fulnesses of body and limbs that so stirred the jealousy of the half-caste—Summer Almond maintained her dark vigils, speculating upon many things that never have ceased to concern the inner consciousnesses of gods and men. It was a place for digesting the diverse philosophies taught her by Jordan and by the Chinese world about her to which she still made an occasional clandestine escape.

Some of these philosophies were put to a test by an event that was destined to repeat itself toward a dénouement that made of Summer Almond a strange arbiter of destiny, as she gazed through the eyes of her Buddha. She had been half dreaming and for some time did not observe the pair that sat under the edge of the shed roof, against the trunk of a pear tree. It was Untermeyer's voice that roused her, with something like a mixture of repulsion and fear. Sitting opposite Untermeyer, on the other side of a small table, was her fat foster mother. There was an afternoon stillness over the sleepy summer world that made their words easily audible to her, and she listened with a malicious intentness, keeping her round eyes fixed eagerly upon the slits in the Buddha's head.

"He is asleep, I suppose. You needn't worry. He has taken to opium lately."

It was the half-caste's voice. The child heard Untermeyer rejoin, in vulgarly hoarse accents.

"If he found me here—with you——"

The woman shrugged her shoulders.

"Do you find the game worth the risk or not?"

By way of accepting her challenge he reached a coarse hand across the table and grasped hers, rubbing them awkwardly.

She laughed, and gave his caresses a response with her wickedly seductive eyes—almost all that remained to her of beauty.

"Now if you only had a whisky-soda you would be in heaven, wouldn't you? I'll call the brat."

When she lifted her voice in a clamorous summons to Summer Almond a look of alarm came to Untermeyer's face.

"Don't bring her here," he urged. "She's sure to blab to Jordan. She hates me. I don't know why."

"Leave her to me. She won't tell. I'll threaten her—and this time I'll mean it. I'm about ready to drown her anyway. And you needn't suppose she wouldn't find out about your coming. She's got eyes like a cat."

At a second and more impatient outcry Summer Almond slipped from her retreat, through the hole in the wall hidden by the dusky bulk of the Buddha, and in a moment or two appeared before the half-caste, averting her eyes from Untermeyer's uneasy gaze.

"Bring whisky-tansan. And melon seeds.

Be quick! And look here! If you ever say anything to *him*—about—— You sabby? I'll kill you with my own hands! Now go."

It is doubtful if Summer Almond thought so much of the moral aspects of the situation as she did of its practical effects upon the interests of Jordan. The child felt very strongly that it would be a good thing if the fat Lulu were to run off with Untermeyer. So there was no danger of her telling Jordan. She would wait—and hope.

She went oftener to her retreat after that, taking care to be there during the drowsy part of the afternoon when it was likely Jordan would be asleep and Untermeyer would come to make love to the fat half-caste. Her repulsion for Untermeyer grew to uncanny proportions. She became utterly certain that the great wart alongside his nose was an index to something vaguely diabolical in him. Her imagination that he was possessed of a devil became a conviction.

It had been long since Untermeyer had been seen with Jordan. They had been split by some business difference. But now he came almost daily. Whether his motive really was an illicit love of Jordan's woman, or whether it was something peculiarly mercenary, was a consideration that did not enter into Summer Almond's speculations.

One day things became clearer to the child. She heard the clandestine pair under the Buddha's nose talking in more guarded tones than usual, over more copious ministrations of whisky-tansan.

"How would you do it?" asked the woman. "A knife?"

"No, you fool. You must think of something safer."

"I must think? Must I *do* it too?"

"Certainly. You have access to him."

"It's the way with you men. The guilt you always manage to put on us. But if I do—— Is it agreed that we go, together, to Bombay?"

"After you have sold the property and turned everything into English gold."

"But why the property? That would be dangerous."

"If it were not for that, what use would there be in killing him? You could come with me any time—at once."

"Ah, then it *is* the money, after all. I suspected it. You do not care for me alone—not without the money."

A wheedling tone came into the man's voice. He cajoled her, until she came and sat heavily upon his lap, and clasped her fat arms about his huge neck.

"It's always the way with you men," she sighed. And when she had gone back to her chair they fell to discussing again the means of ridding themselves of the superfluous Jordan.

"I've got an idea," the woman suggested at last. "We must use poison, that's certain. He has plenty of it in his office. I'll get it to-night, while he sleeps."

"But how will you give it to him? In his food?"

"No. The servants would suspect. This is my idea. We must slit the ends of roasted melon seeds with a knife, and then soak them in poison—one that kills quickly."

"That sounds fantastic. It won't work. We must think of something practical."

"It *will* work. He is very fond of melon seeds. And listen—it is the brat that always gives them to him. She sits in his lap like any Chinese singsong girl, cracking the seeds between her teeth and putting the kernels in his mouth."

"Then she will die too?"

"Yes. The brat will die too."

"But the foreign doctor—he will discover the poisoning."

"You fool! The foreign doctor is not here. He is gone, with all the foreigners, to the hills. No one will know. And we can be far away before the foreigners return."

Summer Almond paled in the obscurity of her retreat, and trembled so that she had difficulty in remaining so quiet as not to betray her presence.

Should she tell Jordan? And if she did would he only laugh at her? He would not believe such chatter. She knew him.

She watched the half-caste that night with the eyes of a lynx. She saw the process of soaking melon seeds in the poison, and watched while the woman set them out in the accustomed bowl on Jordan's table.

When the house was in silence Summer Almond emptied the bowl, carrying its contents to a secret place, and filling it again with seeds she had purchased that afternoon in exchange for the red ribbon from her hair. Then she slept, knowing that the fate of her foster father lay safe in her hands.

In the morning, before tiffin, she sat on

the arm of Jordan's chair, and laughing gayly, fed him melon seeds while he told her stories which concerned the deeds of certain small American girls. Perhaps, he was promising her, some day he would take her to a place where she, too, should be an American girl, like those others, and he should revisit scenes lost to him by these many years.

From the corner of her eye, as she cracked the seeds between her teeth, Summer Almond saw the anxious face of the half-caste, through an interstice in the veranda screen, watching perplexedly for the sudden death that miraculously did not occur.

And that afternoon Summer Almond listened gleefully to the words of the conspiring couple beneath the pear tree.

"You used the wrong dope, then," Untermyer was chiding the woman. "Or did your nerve fail?"

She was vehement in protest.

"Then we must try something else. We're wasting too much time on this job. There are reasons why I must get out of here. We may have to go before we turn all this into cash." He indicated with a heavy sweep of the arm the houses and the godowns that belonged to Jordan. "Your idea about the melon seeds was a silly one. We must think of something practical."

"No. I tell you the seeds are best. The bottle was labeled 'Poison' I know. But it could not have contained any. Now listen. I've got a Chinese drug. Oh, it cost a big 'squeeze.' I had to give up a gold ring to the scoundrel. I'll send for more seeds. You shall poison them yourself. Then you'll know it's all right. Nothing is all right for you men unless you do it for yourselves."

In the end Summer Almond was summoned shrilly and sent to the old confection dealer on the corner for fresh seeds. The child went tremblingly, and with a gray sickness tugging at her consciousness. She began to fear lest she should not always prevail against the persistence of these plotters. The enormous confidence of youth began to fail her. It would be necessary, it seemed, to go talebearing to Jordan. If he should treat the matter lightly what should she do then? But if it should be otherwise, assuredly he would kill the half-caste and her plotting lover. Then how should he escape death himself—and the devils of hell? If only she could pay the penalty for him. If she could kill them—

There was no logic—it was an impetuous and not wholly understood prompting of self-sacrifice that could belong only to extreme youth—in the impulse that set her steps swiftly and without faltering toward the place where she had hidden the poisoned seeds. She ran to the old confectioner and bribed him with smiles to wrap them in a leaf and tie them for her with fiber. Then she set the parcel down before the plotters, immersed now in the intimacies of whisky-soda, and retired to her trysting place with the Buddha.

The hope that had filled her small mind was so frail as to seem no less than pitifully absurd even to her. It was rewarded by an arrangement of the Destiny that of a surety must preside over all such matters. For the woman, forgetting the sinister suggestion that must have attached itself to the melon seeds had she been wholly free from the influence of liquor, began absently cracking a handful in her teeth and feeding the deathly morsels to the amorous Untermyer. The child watched breathlessly through the grave eyes of Buddha for the dénouement. It was not long in coming, and it was not so much tragic as it was vulgarly grotesque. She shut her eyes at last on the brief struggle that left the pair sprawled in the discomfort of a hideous death beneath the rustling pear tree.

Summer Almond remained in her retreat waiting for the inevitable discovery. A servant came into the courtyard, uttered a shriek, and disappeared. A few moments later there came at the heels of the returning servant Jordan and a foreigner whom she did not know.

She watched breathlessly the events that followed—the comings and goings—the exclamations—the chattering fear of the servants. More closely than all else she watched Jordan, and listened for the words that fell from his lips. He found the poisoned seeds, and in the midst of the speculations as to who was the author of this deed of murder she heard at last the syllables of her name.

A servant was questioned. He had seen Summer Almond bring the melon seeds. The old confectioner on the corner was summoned. He recalled how Summer Almond had brought him the seeds to wrap.

"You think the child could have done this?" Summer Almond heard the foreigner inquire of Jordan. "But with what motive?"

Jordan shook his head.

"She loved me. She hated this man, with an unreasoning, child's hate. This woman she hated, too, but for good reason. Is that enough? You think not. But you do not understand the Chinese. You are a psychologist, and perhaps you understand the Chinese mind, but you do not understand the Chinese soul. She must have thought she was doing me a service. Does that seem credible?"

"You must find the child. That is the only way to make sure. She will tell you, no doubt."

"She will not be found, I think," answered Jordan.

And though the search was long, and the servants went far into the city, they found no trace of her.

When the bodies were being taken from the courtyard the child's name still was on the lips of Jordan and the foreigner.

"What will become of her?" she heard the stranger ask.

"What *has* become of her, you had better say."

"You mean—she has killed herself?"

"She would be likely to. It is very probable."

And Summer Almond saw an incredible thing. She saw tears streaming down Jordan's lined cheeks.

"She was a wonderful child—I couldn't have loved her better if she had been my own," the girl heard him say. "It is a punishment for me. I have had too many sins. I have been concerned too much with such carnion as this."

And watching this grief of the man who was more to her than God, Summer Almond nibbled with a spirit of exaltation at the handful of poisoned melon seeds she had taken with her in instinctive preparation for the fate that should claim her behind the mask of the heathen god.



WANTED: INFORMATION

THERE are rare occasions when a witticism on the floor of the House carries also the beauty of a tribute to a man's personality. There was an instance of this when Judge Saunders, a member of the House from Virginia, was delivering a speech.

Saunders had just been interrupted by a representative from Michigan, and one from Connecticut had made a point of order against the interruption.

"Mr. Speaker," exclaimed the Connecticut man, "the gentleman from Michigan has no right to interrupt without the permission of the chair. In the last twenty-five minutes the member who is addressing us has not spoken for five minutes without an interruption. We can hear the other gentleman anywhere, in the lobby, or out on the street. What we want now is information."



CHAMP CLARK SPOTS A BUG

EVER since the United States jumped into the war, cabinet officers and members of Congress have been haunted, hounded and harassed by inventors who want to sell the government devices for either destroying or saving life. These gentry have settled in the national capital in swarms.

A member of the band picked out Champ Clark, Speaker of the House, as his particular victim, and, after several interviews with him, the Speaker began to be excessively bored whenever he appeared.

One morning Mr. Clark, walking down a corridor of the capitol with Representative James R. Mann of Chicago, saw his persecutor and remarked:

"Jim, there's one of those pesky inventors. I don't believe the fellow's got good sense. He seems to be weak in the upper story.' Why, he's a regular bug."

"Yes," assented Mann who had had his own troubles along the same line; "hum-bug."

A Chat With You

DID any one ever advise you to read "serious" literature and give up the tale of action and drama? We've had that advice handed to us more than once and we've tried to follow it. If by "serious" is meant the great literature of the past, the literature that has lasted through the ages, we think that the advice is excellent. But this old-time serious literature was not always taken seriously when it was written. We have no doubt that there were certain highly educated Greeks who regarded Homer as blood-and-thunder stuff written for the crowds and featuring gods and goddesses who never existed. Britons used to think Shakespeare a lightweight mentally compared to "rare Ben Jonson," whose readers today are rarer than he ever thought of being. Dickens was just a bright young fellow who wrote rollicking humor and sensational tales of low life in London, which ran serially in the more popular magazines. Thackeray was considered a good excuse to kill time with, as was Sir Walter Scott. Also, when you begin to examine the pages of Hugo or Balzac, or, best of all, Dumas, you find that their literature was by no means of the meditative variety, but had plenty of action in it. Stevenson was rated as a writer for boys when "Treasure Island" appeared, and now they study him in the colleges. If this is what is meant by serious literature, we are for it. We believe also that it hasn't all been written yet, but that likely as not some more of it, to be remembered for many years, will appear in this magazine before we are through.

THE "serious" literature of to-day, however, is another matter. There is a type of magazine that is well known but that few people read. A man who rarely reads anything but the financial page of the daily paper will subscribe to it. He has heard it was a good magazine. When he weighs it in his hand he finds it is heavily constructed of calendered paper, also that it contains refined-looking, wash-drawing illustrations, and very artistic and interesting advertisements of automobiles, new bond issues, and expensive private schools. When the magazine arrives, it is taken from its wrapper and laid on the library table. It looks so well there, and so respectable that it generally stays there. You know where to find it. No one has carried it off to the country to finish a story, or taken it up to bed with him. It is quite as much a garniture, or parlor ornament, as it is reading matter. You would as soon think of carrying off a vase. We have done repeatedly what few people have ever done. We have read these magazines through. We have often enjoyed the gentle articles on travel. We have admired the illustrations. We have found the fiction serious and very quiet. We could get that kind if we wanted. It is the story in which nothing happens. It is the tale of the mother who has her feelings hurt by her daughter and finally gets over it. It is the story of the wife who thinks she is tired of her husband, and, after thinking about it all night, decides she isn't, after all. It is the tearful tale of the girl who wants to go to college and whose father

A CHAT WITH YOU—Continued.

won't let her. This is "serious" fiction. The few who really like it say that it is true to life, while our fiction, admitting it to be much livelier, is not true to life.



WHAT we maintain is that the kind of fiction we give you—or try to give you—is much truer to life than the other. The "serious" fiction suffers from the fault of being all fiction and no life. We sometimes give you roars of laughter. So does life itself. We sometimes show you murder and sudden death, crime and intrigue, honor and self-sacrifice, keen and dramatic strife, action and movement above all things. These things are all true to life. In fact, they are the very substance of life itself, and without them there is death. If you think a man's life is dull and prosaic, it is because you don't really know the man or his life. Every man has his drama, so much more than he is looking for, that when he gets old he begins to tire of it. Every man has his heartbreaking moments of cowardice and indecision, his weak moments of self-indulgence, his high and sparkling moments of self-sacrifice and renunciation, his daring moments of courage and audacity. Every man's life is a complete and beautiful drama, either comedy, tragedy or romantic adventure—if we could read it aright.



CIVILIZATION doesn't take the drama out of life. It intensifies it. There is keener conflict of character in the city than in the jungle. We used to think that the poor led dull, prosaic lives, but surely Dickens has shown us that the poor are funny, dramatic, romantic, adventurous, tragic—but never dull. There is a temptation to-day to imagine that the multimillionaire has had all the romance and adventure taken out of his life by the riches that have piled up around him and shut off his light and

air. To look at his face as he rolls past in his limousine one might think so. He has his thrilling adventures, however. There is the wonderful, romantic adventure of how big an income tax he has to pay next year. Figuring it out brings all the delicious qualms of an unsuccessful attempt to break the bank at Monte Carlo and all the surprises of a trip to a new planet. Also, think of the thrill of pleasure that must be his when he finds out some night that he doesn't have to go to a grand opera, but can stay home and play solitaire. His lot may not be a happy one, but it is full of romance.

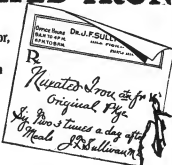


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